



CITY OF DELRAY BEACH
ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
OPIOID SETTLEMENT ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

100 NW 1st Avenue
Delray Beach, FL 33444

Monday, April 6, 2026

11:00 a.m.

City Hall, 1st Floor Conference Room

1. **CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Joseph Mazzeo at 11:01 am.

2. **ROLL CALL:**

Present:

Adelle Azam (arrived at 11:10 am)
Ariana Ciancio, Police Department
Charles Ridley, Vice Chair
Joseph Mazzeo, Fire Department, Chair
Lisa McWhorter

Absent:

Jeffrey Lefton
Kenya Madison

Staff present:

Jeff Oris, Assistant City Manager / Board Liaison
Lawonda Warren, Legal Advisor
Ronald Martin, Fire Rescue Chief
Jeane St. Luce, Executive Assistant

Roll was called and quorum was present.

3. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

A Motion was made by Charles Ridley to approve the agenda, seconded by Lisa McWhorter. All in favor, no opposed. Motion **PASSED** unanimously (5-0).

4. **MINUTES**

A Motion was made by Lisa McWhorter to approve March 2, 2026 minutes, seconded by Charles Ridley. All in favor, no opposed. Motion **PASSED** unanimously (5-0).

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dr. Ashley Ridley, Drug Abuse Foundation, 400 S. Swinton Avenue, extended an invitation to Fire Rescue, Police and city staff to attend a Lunch and Learn session during the month of May. The session will focus on increasing awareness of available crisis support services. The Drug Abuse Foundation is hoping to explore a partnership with the City of Delray Beach.

Dr. Suzanne Spencer, Living Skills, 33445, expressed confusion regarding what the committee and Assistant City Manager Oris took away from the Commission meeting held a few weeks ago. She noted that during the Commission meeting, there was a clear interest from the dais in exploring both paramedicine and prevention efforts as part of the opioid settlement funding strategy. However, at the last committee meeting, she observed a shift in focus with the discussion entirely on expanding paramedicine and no consideration for prevention.

She further explained that the discussion included the potential use of Caron funds for prevention and questioned whether the committee is evaluating both recommendations in alignment with the direction provided by the dais. Additionally, she emphasized that in reviewing the paramedicine budget, the committee should continue to explore elements such as oversight, program administration and evaluation. She also recommended reviewing prior data from the paramedicine pilot program to better understand the true cost. She concluded by reiterating the importance of considering the prevention program.

6. OLD BUSINESS:**A. Discussion Regarding Formulation Of Further Recommendation For Paramedicine Program**

Joseph Mazzeo, Chair, stated that Fire Rescue Chief Martin provided a memorandum outlining a Mobile Integrated Health program with four cost tiers, which included, highest/best, mid-level, minimal and low levels of services. He invited Fire Rescue Chief Martin to provide further clarification.

Fire Rescue Chief Martin provided a verbal explanation of his proposed Mobile Integrated Health program.

Adelle Azam arrived at the meeting.

Charles Ridley inquired about the program's funding source.

Assistant City Manager Oris stated that there is currently no identified funding source. Opioid Settlement funds may cover a portion of the program, but additional support would need to come from the general fund. If capital expenses arise, grant funding could be pursued; however, no funding source has been secured at this time.

Joseph Mazzeo, Chair, asked what percentage of the program would be related to opioid or substance abuse.

Fire Rescue Chief Martin stated he would comply with all applicable requirements, noting that time would be tracked proportionally. He added that he is requesting a Community Health Paramedic position and provided additional details regarding the training and education associated with that role.

Assistant City Manager Oris clarified that future funding from opioid settlement funds is estimated to be between \$62,000 and \$93,000 annually, representing only a portion of the total funding needed.

Charles Ridley, Vice Chair, asked how the Caron funds would factor into the program.

Lisa McWhorter requested clarification on the Caron funds.

Lawonda Warren, Legal Advisor, explained there was an opioid litigation case with the Caron Foundation. As part of the settlement agreement, the foundation provides annual funding designated for specific purposes. Per the agreement, these funds are to be used for substance abuse training and education for organizations within the city, including but limited to school, churches and other charitable institutions. She noted that, in the past, the city used the funds to support educational initiatives and grants to local schools. She also clarified that the Caron funds are separate from the opioid settlement funds.

Assistant City Manager Oris stated that the use the Caron funds has not been officially designated to this committee for recommendations, and discussion on their use will not take place until clear direction is provided by the Commission.

Lisa McWhorter asked how much funding is available. Assistant City Manager Oris indicated that he would obtain that information.

Ariana Ciancio asked whether the funds, which were intentionally designated for education, specifically referred to substance abuse education.

Lawonda Warren, Legal Advisor, clarified that the funds are intended for substance abuse training and education.

Chuck Ridley, Vice Chair, asked if the funds had previously been used for academic purposes to support schools. Lawonda Warren, Legal Advisor, confirmed that their most recent use was for that purpose.

Joseph Mazzeo, Chair, stated that the discussion keeps returning to the same point because, while the goals and available funds are known, there are not sufficient funds to fully support the initiative.

Fire Rescue Chief Martin explained that the handout on the Mobile Integrated Health program is for informational purposes only and noted that, when fully implemented, the program would be costly. He added that the program could help seniors remain in their homes, address prevention and addiction issues and provide educational opportunities to enhance quality of life, while acknowledging the overall expense involved.

Assistant City Manager shared that he, Fire Rescue Chief Martin and Chair Mazzeo recently spoke with the Beverly Hills, California Fire Department, which has operated a similar program for several years. The discussion provided valuable insight into their operations, including the scope of their team and the strategies they have implemented. He noted that, in his assessment, while the program is highly beneficial, current insurance reimbursement models significantly lag, preventing the program from being self-sustaining.

Fire Rescue Chief Martin stated that over the past decade, since mobile integrated health became part of the fire and emergency medical services field, its value has been recognized at the local, state and federal levels. However, he explained that while its positive impact on quality of life is well understood, there has been little progress at the state and federal levels in developing funding mechanisms to offset cost and support long-term sustainability. As a result, local governments are left to bear financial responsibility for these programs.

Assistant City Manager Oris added that although the program may generate savings, the city would still be responsible for covering the upfront and ongoing costs.

Charles Ridley, Vice Chair, asked for clarification regarding the \$700,000 capital costs associated with the program.

Fire Rescue Chief Martin stated he would need to find or create additional workspace.

Lisa McWhorter noted that existing services are already in place, such as the Health Care District clinic within the city. She emphasized the need to explore partnerships, as this organization may assist with providing funding support.

Discussion ensued on workspace augmentation.

Charles Ridley, Vice Chair, stated the committee needs to develop a recommendation to present to the Commission outlining how the opioid settlement funds should be allocated, whether a portion should support specific programs or if the full amount should be dedicated to a single program. He stressed the importance of providing a clear recommendation on the use of the funds.

Assistant City Manager Oris suggested reaffirming the committee's prior recommendation to the Commission that if the Commission chooses to fund the paramedicine program, opioid funds should be used for that purpose. However, if that program proves financially unfeasible, a secondary recommendation should be presented.

Adelle Azam asked if this is to prevent or reduce the influx of emergency room visits by utilizing Fire Rescue or is this more for a triage intervention before the situation escalates.

Assistant City Manager stated both. He elaborated that the approach serves multiple purposes, which includes following up with known individuals who have been transported to the emergency room, encouraging people to seek further assistance and connecting people with the appropriate resources.

Fire Rescue Chief Martin explained that this program will operate on two levels. First, it would accept referrals from first responders in the field, including both Fire Rescue and the Police department. Second, it would take proactive approach by identifying individuals in the community who may benefit from these services. He also noted the importance of partnerships with healthcare providers to ensure when patients are discharged from the hospital, whether from substance-related issues or the elderly who may not have a support system, the program would include follow-up visits to ensure continuity of care.

Discussion continued covering various components of the Mobile Integrated Health program.

B. Discussion Regarding Presentation Recommendation To The City Commission

Lisa McWhorter raised concern about recommending the full allocation of the opioid settlement funds to the Mobile Integrated Health program without clarity on how the remaining associated costs would be funded.

Joseph Mazzeo, Chair, responded that he understands her concerns. He asked whether it would be an appropriate recommendation to provide 80% of the opioid related funds to the Fire Department for the Mobile Integrated Health program and 20% designated for prevention efforts.

Assistant City Manager Oris confirmed that such a recommendation is appropriate, particularly as it coincides with the start of the budget season. He noted that the Commission would incorporate the committee's recommendation into a broader budget discussion. He reminded the committee that the Commission had already been informed that the opioid settlement funds alone would not fully fund the program and the Commission still expressed interest in moving forward.

Lisa McWhorter expressed her concern on allocating funding to a program that has not yet been established and questioned how it would help the fire department. She emphasized the need for a clearer plan in starting the program.

Joseph Mazzeo, Chair, stated that the committee could make a recommendation to allocate a percentage of the opioid settlement funds to initiate the Mobile Integrated Health program with the understanding the city or Fire Department's existing budget would need to cover the remaining costs.

Lisa McWhorter suggested that if the Mobile Integrated Health program is not approved, the board could consider recommending the funds be directed to the Police Department to enhance and expand on the existing program

Ariana Ciancio stated to her understand the funds cannot be used to support an existing program. She added that it would be more beneficial to have a counterpart with the Fire Department leading a Mobile Integrated Health program and described the advantages observed during the Fire Department's previous pilot program.

Discussion ensued on the benefits of the pilot Mobile Integrated Health program and the needs of the city.

Charles Ridley, Vice Chair, acknowledged the value of both the Mobile Integrated Health program and prevention efforts and emphasized his desire for both to move forward. He expressed his reluctance to assign a specific dollar amount to either program. He stated that the Commission must commit to supporting these programs; if Commission cannot support investing additional financial support to the Mobile Integrated Health program, then funding should be directed toward prevention.

Ariana Ciancio shared that her program began with a single staff member and expanded over time in response to the needs of the community. She suggested that the Fire Department could take a similar approach by starting small and gradually building the program.

Discussion followed regarding the benefits of mobile integrated health and the importance of partnerships with the healthcare sector.

Joseph Mazzeo, Chair, explained the reason most of the discussion is on the Mobile Integrated Health program instead of prevention is because prevention is easier to address as it can be funded with a defined amount or percentage. In contrast, most of the mobile integrated health discussions are due to uncertainties about whether the city can fund the remaining costs. He emphasized that the committee should still make a recommendation, recognizing that the program may not move forward if funding is not secured.

Assistant City Manager Oris stated that, per policy, the committee is required to provide a recommendation to the Commission by May 1st. He recommended submitting a recommendation by the May 1st deadline, with the understanding that if the Commission does not support it, the committee will need to go back to the drawing board.

Adelle Azam suggested using the Police Departments program as a model.

Charles Ridley, Vice Chair, questioned if the total amount available for recommendation is approximately \$174,000. Assistant City Manager Oris confirmed.

Joseph Mazzeo, Chair, proposed that the committee recommend allocating the full opioid settlement amount of \$174,435.72 to the Fire Department to support the inception of the Mobile Integrated Health program.

Lisa McWhorter added that the program could begin on a smaller scale, then expand over time into a fully integrated model.

Charles Ridley, Chair, asked Assistant City Manager Oris, whether a recommendation to use the opioid settlement funds to seed the program would be considered valid.

Assistant City Manager Oris explained that if the committee makes such a recommendation, the Commission will need to discuss further with the Fire Rescue Chief to determine what the program would entail and how much additional funding would be require from other sources. He noted that the Commission would then decide whether to adopt the recommendation.

He also pointed out that the timing presents a challenge, as the city is in the early stages of the budget process and final decisions are not made until September. However, the committee must submit its recommendation by May 1st, since the Commission is required to decide by June 30th for him to report by July 1st on how the funds will be allocated. He added that there may be additional one-time settlement funds in the future, but the amount and timing remain uncertain.

Charles Ridley, Vice Chair, asked whether it would be appropriate to recommend that all the opioid settlement funds be used to support the program, while also encouraging the city to identify additional resources for prevention efforts.

A Motion was made by Charles Ridley to make a recommendation to the City Commission to use 100% of the available opioid settlement funds towards a Mobile Integrated Health program, seconded by Lisa McWhorter. All in favor, no opposed. Motion **PASSED** unanimously **(5-0)**.

A Motion was made by Charles Ridley to send a strong message that primary prevention is important, seconded by Lisa McWhorter. Motion **WITHDRAWN**.

Discussion ensued on importance of primary prevention and the use of Caron funds.

Assistant City Manager Oris suggested that the committee consider selecting a member to present its recommendation to the Commission.

There was a consensus by the committee to defer the selection until the next meeting.

7. **NEW BUSINESS:**

None

8. **COMMENTS:**

A. Staff

Assistant City Manager Oris stated that several board members are at risk of removal due to attendance issues. He explained that, under city policy, a committee member may not miss three consecutive meetings or more than 33% of the meetings within a 12-month period.

Discussion ensued on the meeting schedule, including the possibility of changing the day and time.

Assistant City Manager Oris stated he will poll committee members to determine a meeting time that works best for everyone.

B. Committee Members

Ariana Ciancio stated she may be unavailable to attend the May 4th meeting but will notify Assistant City Manager Oris in advance.

9. **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 pm.

Board Liaison

Date

Board Chair

Date