



## AmeriCorps Cape Cod

### Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

#### **I. Call to Order**

- a. Ms. Hutchinson called to order the meeting of the AmeriCorps Cape Cod Advisory Board at 9:04 am on Friday, June 11, 2021, held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

#### **II. Attendance**

- a. Members present: John Ohman, Brian Sharp, Nancy Church, Rachel Hutchinson, Timothy Famulare, Michael Lach, Ryan Burch, Phillip Burt, Nina Coleman, Jessica Whritenour, Lauren McKean, Heather McElroy
- b. Members Absent: Steve McKenna, Sheila Lyons

#### **III. Public Comment- N/A**

#### **IV. Approval of Minutes**

- a. Meeting of January 22, 2021- will approve at the next meeting (scheduling TBD).

#### **V. General Business – N/A**

#### **VI. Staff Updates**

- a. Phillip Burt & Andrew Platt -Director & Deputy Director Updates:
  - i. Mr. Burt, the Director of the Cape Cod Center for Public Safety Training, announced that, in late May 2021, AmeriCorps Cape Cod was approved for its upcoming 3-year grant cycle and explained that the program received the full \$390,000 grant which will allow for the recruitment of 24 members. Mr. Burt expressed that he, Mr. Platt, and Ms. Ballinger have been in communication with the Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA) to discuss clarifications about the grant. Mr. Burt also explained that AmeriCorps the Agency and the Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA) did not approve the program's proposed evaluation study. Mr. Burt said that more work will need to be done by staff to edit and revise the evaluation plan.



- ii. Mr. Burt explained that he, Mr. Platt, and Ms. Ballinger participated in the first phase of AmeriCorps Cape Cod's MSA site visit that took place on Monday, June 7, 2021.
- iii. Mr. Burt and Mr. Platt said that the two of them have stepped in to help support the program by assessing program residences, evaluating the needs of the program staff, and determining program purchasing needs for the upcoming 3-year grant cycle. Mr. Burt and Mr. Platt have scheduled three house days throughout June 2021, at 3 of the 4 program residences, to have members help complete clean-up projects around the properties.
- iv. Mr. Lach asked when those house project days would be occurring in June. Mr. Burt replied that members will be helping with projects at the Wellfleet residence on Monday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, the Chatham residence on Monday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, and the Pocasset residence on Monday, June 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Platt said that he would send out an email to the Advisory Board with the dates of each house project day in case any board member is interested in stopping by. Mr. Burt replied that he and Mr. Platt are planning to actively work with the Corps to ensure that that the last six weeks of the program year can end on a positive note.
- v. Mr. Burt provided an update on program staff re-structuring. Mr. Burt explained that he sent a memo to County Administrator, Beth Albert, outlining the program's history as well as the program's present state. Mr. Burt said that in his memo he expressed the need for greater staff support. In his memo, Mr. Burt asked that the County help create and fund two additional Program Supervisor positions to allow for one live-in Supervisor to be present at each of the four program residences. Mr. Burt explained that two of the Supervisor positions would be funded through the program's grant and the other two would be funded through Barnstable County. Mr. Burt said that he and Mr. Platt shared the idea of hiring four supervisors to the current Corps members to gauge interest at the house meetings that Mr. Burt and Mr. Platt ran on the evening of Wednesday, June 9<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Burch asked if the program had given any thought to bringing Darlene Johnson-Morris back to help with the program? Mr. Burt said that he had not spoken with Ms. Johnson-Morris and did not know how it could work to hire Ms. Johnson-Morris contractually through Barnstable County. Mr. Ohman asked about what reactions the program has received from County executives regarding the hiring of two more Program Supervisors. Mr. Burt explained that the County is supportive of this idea. Mr. Burt also expressed that the County recognizes that AmeriCorps Cape Cod may be putting themselves in a tenuous legal position should a member get hurt at one of the program



residences without staff being present. Mr. Ohman inquired about the proposed budget for hiring two more Program Supervisors and explained that the County has received \$22 million in federal funds and has reserve funds that could help support a staff increase. Mr. Burt replied that he would email the memo and other relevant documents to Mr. Ohman to look over. Mr. Platt recognized that many of the program's founding individuals are no longer with the program and that there is a lack of institutional knowledge present among the current staff. Mr. Platt expressed that this lack of knowledge hurts the program and creates a trickle-down impact to the Corps members. Mr. Platt explained that is important to build foundational support for the staff, members, and program at large, and believes that the start to the new 3-year grant cycle can allow for a fresh start.

- vi. Mr. Burt explained that member mental health has become a prominent issue in the program. Mr. Burt suggested creating sub-committees within the Advisory Board to assist with member and program support. Mr. Burt said that he has been in contact with County Administrator, Beth Albert, about mental health resources that the program can utilize. Mr. Platt suggested dedicating a sub-committee to assisting with member recruitment and the member interview process. Ms. Hutchinson replied that she liked the idea of creating sub-committees and believes that the Advisory Board is comprised of individuals who want to be more fully involved in member support and development. Ms. McElroy recognized that the program has keyed in on member needs and has assessed program problem areas. Ms. McElroy followed by saying she would like to provide more support to the members and the program where she is able. Ms. McKean expressed that the program and board should be proud of making it through two years impacted by COVID. Ms. McKean noted that the Advisory Board members play an important role in programmatic outreach and support in the community. Ms. Coleman said that she would like to contribute to assisting and supporting the program but would like to be guided by program staff with specific tasks. Ms. Coleman suggested having board members assigned to assisting Corps members that are in similar geographic areas across Cape Cod. Ms. Church expressed that the community awareness of the program is low and suggested having board members assist with getting the word out about the program through tabling at local events/job fairs or writing letters to the editor. Mr. Burch suggested each Advisory Board member being assigned to mentor 1-2 Corps members and help get the Corps members integrated into the larger Cape Cod community.



vii. Mr. Platt expressed issues of limited staff bandwidth and suggested Ms. Hutchinson, Ms. Whritenour, and program staff schedule a time to meet and discuss a plan and scheduling for the Advisory Board for the future. Mr. Platt also recognized that a meeting with Ms. Hutchinson, Ms. Whritenour, and program staff would be a good opportunity to discuss filling the two open board member seats. Ms. Whritenour expressed a feeling of concern and uncertainty from the current Town of Falmouth Individual Placements (Falmouth Conservation Commission and Town of Falmouth, Shellfish & Biological Services Division). Ms. Whritenour said she would like to set up a call with program staff and the Individual Placement site partners to discuss concerns. Ms. Hutchinson suggested bringing Corps members to town select board meetings to be introduced and acquainted with town officials. Mr. Platt asked board members if anyone had ideas on how to get Corps members involved in attending select board meetings. Ms. McElroy reminded the board that there will be new legislature coming out which outline provisions to the Open Meeting Law regarding a virtual platform. Ms. McElroy also expressed that it will be important for future Program Supervisors to help establish connections and communication between Corps members and Advisory Board members. Mr. Burt asked the if board members had ideas on how to conduct Corps members house meetings outside of the house and in a more positive, neutral setting. Mr. Burt extended an invite to board members to get involved and join house meeting activities over the next six weeks. Ms. Hutchinson added that the purpose of the house meetings may have shifted over time as the number of members in the Corps has decreased. Ms. Hutchinson said that her Individual Placement member expressed not feeling a need for weekly check-ins at house meetings because the Corps members within teach residence are in constant communication with one another.

b. Meredith Ballinger-Program Coordinator Updates:

- i. Ms. Ballinger announced that the program is in phases 2 and 3 of its MSA site visit. Ms. Ballinger explained that Phase 2 will consist of member and site partner interviews. Ms. Ballinger said these interviews will be happening throughout June and early July. Ms. Ballinger explained that Phase 3 will consist of a programmatic operation evaluation in which MSA will be reviewing the program's established procedures and systems. Ms. Ballinger said that phase 3 of the site visit will be occurring in late June.
- ii. Ms. Ballinger explained that in lieu of an in-person, winter retreat, the program hosted three virtual Professional Development (PD) days in February, March, and April. The



February Day consisted of team building activities, such as a virtual scavenger hunt, and Life After AmeriCorps Professional Development such as a resume workshop. Ms. Ballinger said that the February PD day consisted of team building activities, such as a virtual scavenger hunt, and Life After AmeriCorps professional development, such as a resume workshop. Ms. Ballinger explained that the March PD Day consisted of virtual ice breakers, and staff led programming including Climate Changes Communication, Service Reflection Activities and Life After AmeriCorps service and employment opportunities. Ms. Ballinger said that the April PD day was a virtual Leadership in the Field training hosted by Dave Crary and was tied into a two day in-person Wildland Fire Fighting Training that took place in May.

c. Phoebe Plank-Program Specialist Update:

- i. Ms. Plank explained that Individual Placement site visits were completed virtually this year (February-March). Ms. Plank said that Corps members have returned to serving in person, as of late March, at their Placements if their host sites can safely accommodate them. Ms. Plank followed up by saying that a few Individual Placements are remaining remote or choosing to use a hybrid, in-person/virtual service model.
- ii. Ms. Plank provided updates that the Annual Cape Cod Canal Clean-Up was a week-long event this year that ran April 18<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Plank said that volunteers used Google Forms to sign-up for clean-up times throughout the week at eight different locations along the Canal. Ms. Plank shared that over 155 volunteers helped remove over 375 pounds of litter over the week. Ms. Plank said that volunteers used the Clean Swell app to record findings, including litter type, amount of litter collected, and clean-up location. Ms. Plank expressed that running the event virtually revealed effected event planning and coordination strategies that will be utilized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and AmeriCorps Cape Cod in future years.

d. Meredith Ballinger- Member Service Highlights:

- i. Ms. Ballinger shared that Corps members from all three houses have served with the Harwich Cemetery Department and the Harwich Conservation Department throughout the year to prepare for the Grand Opening of the James G. Marceline Arboretum in Island Pond Cemetery. Ms. Ballinger said Corps members assisted with the Grand Opening in May by educating member of the community about the 50+ types of tree species identified throughout the 25-acre property.



- ii. Ms. Ballinger said that the Corps members have wrapped up their virtual WetFest programming. Ms. Ballinger explained that Corps members created engaging WetFest animations and videos in partnership with the Cape Cod Cooperative Extension and the Cape Cod Media Center.
- iii. Ms. Ballinger informed the Advisory Board that Corps members assisted at the Little Creek vaccination site in Eastham in February and March by helping set up the site and direct traffic. Ms. Ballinger said that some of the Corps members also signed up to assist the Barnstable County COVID-19 Helpline and Communication team with returning voicemails and creating content for social media.

## **VII. Board Member Updates - N/A**

## **VIII. Upcoming Meetings**

- a. Mr. Platt said that program staff, Ms. Hutchinson, and Ms. Whritenour should meet to discuss scheduling for the upcoming year. Mr. Platt suggested that the Advisory Board meet in late August, after the new staff has begun and prior to the arrival of the new Corps.
- b. Mr. Burt discussed plans for the Year 22 Corps Graduation Ceremony. Mr. Burt explained that planning for the event typically happens starting in January or February, however, it was assumed that the Ceremony would be virtual this year due to COVID-19. Mr. Burt said that the program has decided to host a small in-person celebration for the Corps on Thursday, July 29<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Burt expressed that staff are looking into hosting a 1-2 hour lunch event for the members at the pavilion located at the Barnstable County complex. Mr. Burt followed up by saying that there will be more details to come.

## **IX. Adjournment**

- a. Ms. McElroy motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 am. Mr. Ohman seconded the motion.