



State of New Jersey

PHILIP D. MURPHY  
*Governor*

SHEILA Y. OLIVER  
*Lt. Governor*

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE  
PO BOX 345  
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0345

NEIL VAN ESS  
*Acting Chairman*

CELINA LEVY  
*Executive Director*

**MINUTES**

**Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse**

**March 16, 2021**

**Attendance: Neil Van Ess (Chairman), Celina Levy (Executive Director), Gregg Benson (Public Member), Betty Ann Cowling-Carson (Public Member), Donna DeStefano (Public Member), Frank Greenagel (Public Member), Gisele Pemberton (Public Member), Donna Westhoven (AOC), Jeff Carrick (DCF), Kate Butler (DCA), Herb Kaldany (DOC), Luiz Pereira (DOE), Annette Riordan (DHS), Holly Low (DOL), Craig Sashihara (LPS), Liz Schofield (DMAVA)**

**Call to Order**

The three hundred and forty sixth regular meeting of the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Executive Director Celina Levy.

**Open Public Meetings Act Statement**

Ms. Levy announced that notice of this meeting was provided in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 – 10:4-21). In addition, Ms. Levy stated that public comments were to be provided electronically, through the GCADA website contact portal between the hours of 10am and 1pm on the day of the meeting.

**Roll Call**

Katelyn Assenheimer called the roll. Members present and absent were noted for the record.

**Election of Officers**

Executive Director Celina Levy asked for a nomination for Vice Chair of the Governor's Council. Gregg Benson nominated Neil Van Ess and this was seconded by Donna DeStefano. After a vote, Mr. Van Ess was elected Vice Chairman. (Y-14; N-0; ABS-0)

Mr. Van Ess asked for a nomination for two 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairs. Donna DeStefano nominated Gregg Benson for first 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair and this vote was seconded by Betty Ann Cowling-Carson.

Gregg Benson then nominated Donna DeStefano for the second Vice Chair and this vote was seconded by BettyAnn Cowling-Carson. After a vote, Mr. Benson and Ms. DeStefano were both elected as the two 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairs. (Y-15; N-0; ABS-0)

### **Approval of Minutes**

After a brief discussion, the minutes for December 2020 and January and February of 2021 were approved.

**December (Y-14; N-0; ABS-1)**

**January (Y-12; N-0; ABS-3)**

**February (Y-9; N-0; ABS-6)**

### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Van Ess welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Council members for their attendance and achieving quorum to complete Council business. He shared that Neva Pryor, Executive Director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ would be presenting and asked that Ms. Levy read a proclamation from Governor Murphy declaring March Problem Gambling Awareness Month in New Jersey.

### **Problem Gambling Awareness Month Resolution**

Executive Director Celina Levy read a resolution recognizing March as Problem Gambling Awareness Month in New Jersey. After a vote, this resolution was approved. (Y-15; N-0; ABS-0)

### **Presentation: "The Effects of COVID-19 on Gambling"**

Neva Pryor, Executive Director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ) gave an overview of the work they have been doing over the past year. CCGNJ is a private non-profit organization that provides information, education and referral services for people affected by a gambling problem.

Ms. Pryor shared that due to the pandemic, the unemployment rate increased, which can sometimes lead to gambling due to fears of mounting debt, fear of foreclosure, homelessness and food insecurity. When all brick-and-mortar casinos were closed, it led to an increase in online gambling, especially sports betting.

Despite the pandemic, CCGNJ still operates the 1-800-GAMBLER helpline as well as offering virtual meetings and self help support groups. CCGNJ currently partners with over 50 treatment providers in the state to offer resources for those in need.

## **Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Celina Levy shared with the Council that though the DEDR funds are down from previous years, they will remain stable at present level for FY22. Celina and Rebecca continue to have constructive conversations with the Governor's Office to establish strategies that will help the long-term sustainability of the Alliance Program.

Deputy Director Rebecca Alfaro again shared that the DEDR amounts for FY22 will remain the same and the counties will continue to work on their FY22 plans which will be voted on by the Council in late spring or early summer.

Director of Prevention and Planning, Sara Thode shared that GCADA would be developing a quarterly newsletter that would highlight an innovative Alliance. This newsletter would be sent out by GCADA to all the County Coordinators and Municipal Alliance Coordinators who would then share it with their municipalities. Ms. Thode also continues to send out weekly updates with FAQs emails to the County Coordinators.

Ms. Levy thanked the Council Members for their guidance and support, the County Coordinators and all of the Alliances for the good work they do in light of the challenges faced, GCADA staff and Mr. Van Ess for his leadership.

## **Adjournment**

Mr. Van Ess adjourned the meeting at 11:37.