



**State of New Jersey**

PHILIP D. MURPHY  
*Governor*

TAHESHA L. WAY  
*Lt. Governor*

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE  
PO Box 345  
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0345

NEIL VAN ESS  
*Acting Chairman*

CELINA LEVY  
*Executive Director*

**MINUTES**

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

**November 21, 2023**

**Attendance: Neil Van Ess (Chairman), Celina Levy (Executive Director), John Armato (Public Member), Gregg Benson (Public Member), Eileen Fishman (Public Member), Sweta Kansagra (Public Member), Gisele Pemberton (Public Member), Cornell Williamson (AOC), Jeff Carrick (DCF), Michelle Graham-Lyons (DCA), Herbert Kaldany (DOC), Lu Pereira (DOE), Valerie Mielke (DHS), Rebecca Glinn (DOL), Craig Sashihara (LPS), Noelle Lee-Turner (DMAVA), Allison Samay (NJ President's Council)**

**Call to Order**

The three hundred and seventy sixth regular meeting of the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Acting Chairman Neil Van Ess.

**Open Public Meetings Act Statement**

Mr. Van Ess 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, Mr. Van Ess 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.

**Approval of Minutes**

After a brief discussion, the minutes for September and October were approved.

**September (Y-13; N-0; ABS-2)**

**October (Y-10; N-0; ABS-5)**

## **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Van Ess welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the members for attaining quorum. He welcomed and introduced Noelle Lee-Turner who is DMAVA's new designee and also thanked DMAVA's previous designee, Chuck Robbins for his years of service and contributions to GCADA's efforts.

## **DMHAS Block Grant Funding Expansion Resolutions**

Director of Prevention and Planning, Sara Thode explained to the Council that DMHAS had awarded GCADA additional funding for Alliance programs. These award amounts were allocated from a competitive bid process/RFP and five counties were up for approval.

Executive Director Celina Levy gave an overview of the recusal process. The following Council members informed GCADA of the need to recuse themselves from voting on the DMHAS Block Grant Funding Expansion Resolution:

John Armato – Atlantic County

After a vote, the funding was approved.

- **Joint County DMHAS Block Grant Funding Expansion Resolution (Cape May, Middlesex, Ocean, Salem) (Y-13; N-0; ABS)**
- **Atlantic County DMHAS Block Grant Funding Expansion Resolution (Y-12; N-0; ABS-3)**

## **Veterans Day Resolution**

Executive Director Celina Levy read a resolution recognizing November 11<sup>th</sup> as Veterans Day. After a vote, the resolution was approved. (Y-15; N-0; ABS-0)

## **Presentation: "Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA) Initiatives"**

Esther Chucaralao, Director of Veterans Services of the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs gave an overview of the Department and the programs that are provided to the Council.

Brigadier General Lisa J. Hou is the Adjutant General and Commissioner of the DMAVA. She commands more than 8,400 soldiers and airmen of the NJ National Guard. She also leads, directs, and manages the DMAVA in the execution of federal and state missions. In addition, she also manages all state veteran's programs, commissions, and facilities in NJ.

The NJ DMAVA is tasked with the "Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Members, Veterans and their Families". This is an interagency team of military and civilian leaders tasked with developing a plan to prevent suicide among veterans by implementing evidence-based practices and enhancing local and state-wide suicide prevention efforts. As part of the

Governor's Challenge, NJDMAVA and the New Jersey Hospital Association has implemented a statewide Mental Health First Aid training program in every county.

The Division of Veterans Services is responsible for two transitional housing programs in the state, Veterans Haven South and Veterans Haven North. These programs offer vocational counseling and training for homeless veterans.

The BG Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery provides no charge burials to service members who die on active duty or in active duty status, honorably discharged veterans from the Air Force, Reservists and National Guard members who have 20 years of service as well as spouses and their children.

The Veterans Benefits Bureau offers such services as medal verifications, grants and aids in areas such as homelessness, transportation and education and also comprehensive programs to assist veterans and family members in PTSD counseling.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Celina Levy informed the Council members that GCADA staff has been engaged in the process and administrative changes related to the change in GCADA funding as well as with the DMHAS Block Grant Funding Expansion.

The next Master Plan Subcommittee has been rescheduled for January and updates will be provided after the meeting.

Ms. Levy also reminded the Council members that the Volunteer of the Year Awards ceremony would be taking place at the next GCADA meeting on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Levy thanked the Council members for their input and support, the County Coordinators and Alliances for their good work despite the continued challenges and GCADA staff for their strong work ethic, and to Neil Van Ess for his ongoing leadership.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Van Ess adjourned the meeting at 11:43.