



Planning Council
March 12, 2026
Non-Profit Center
4:00 – 6:00 PM

Summary of Attendance

Members Present

Rick Boyd
Henry Cabrera
Owen Trites
Joey Carlesimo
Milaun Casimir
Stephen Corbett
Beth Gavin
Robert Giannasca
Regina Grier
Amanda Hart
Gerald James
Alison Kirchgasser
Liz Koelynych
Ericka Olivera
Maria Petagna
Zeke Russell
Bryan Thomas
Kim Wilson
Sarah Dupont
Carla Norris
Melissa Hector

Members Excused

Jeff Warach
Daniel Amato
Wayne Callahan
Alyssa Collaro
KC D'Onfro
Fabian Ortiz Hernandez
Shambi Mwandembo
Jennifer Nganga
Serena Rajabiun

Members Absent

Curtis Santos
James Suarez
Meg Von Lossnitzer

Stephen Batchelder

Staff

Clare Killian
Julia Kirsch
Shakira Fedna
Gianna Jirak
Taylor Parent
Melanie Taylor
Rachel Phillips

Topic A: Welcome and Introductions

Planning Council Chair, Henry Cabrera, welcomes everyone to the meeting. He invites everyone to say hello to the person to their left and right and tell them how they're feeling today. He holds a moment of silence and goes over the group agreements.

Topic B: Review Meeting Minutes

Henry asks if anyone has any additional edits to the minutes for February 12, 2026. Alison Kirchgasser articulated her edits to PCS via email, and the most updated version is on Basecamp.

Motion to Approve: Bryan Thomas

Second: Liz Koelynych

Result: Unanimous approval from Council.

Topic C: Agency Updates

Owen Trites, MDPH:

- Integrated plan is coming along nicely, we are meeting with MIPCC on March 19th to review our goals. Goals and objectives were developed by MIPCC members during the previous two MIPCC meetings.
- Integrated Planning Steering Committee and coordination across DPH and BPHC continues to go well. BPHC is finalizing their objectives for the MA IP 3.0.
- Next EHE Steering Committee meeting is on Monday, April 6th. The purpose of this meeting will be to present the draft goals, objectives, and activities to the committee.
- OHA is coordinating with the Bureau of Community Health and Prevention (BCHAP) for activities around school-based health centers in the integrated plan and for implementation going forward.
- OHA has established a quarterly meeting with the State Office of Rural Health to coordinate efforts and future collaborations around activities in rural parts of the state.

Maria Petagna, NH DHHS:

- Beyond work going on with IHP, no updates

Alison Kirchgasserm Mass Health:

- No updates

Melissa Hector, Mayoral Liaison:

- Melissa highlights a few major events and initiatives happening in the upcoming months, including: emergency management planning for the FIFA World Cup, planning various events for Pride Month, upcoming STI and HIV testing from the infectious disease team, and the Black Men's Health Activation Summit on June 3rd, 2026.
- To read more about the city's first Black Life Expectancy Report: <https://www.boston.gov/news/first-black-life-expectancy-report-and-efforts-address-longstanding-health-inequities>

Melanie Lopez, Ryan White Part A:

- We are working on finalizing our annual docs, which will be released by next week, including CQM materials overviewing our subpopulations of focus. We are finalizing final reporting for ourselves and providers for the fiscal year. Happy to report that all of our agencies received their FY 26 contract amendments and we are beginning to receive the signed versions back.

Level funding Update from ARC:

In preparation for FY26, Ryan White Services reviewed the level funding recommendation from ARC and there was approximately \$50,000 removed from PSS and added to EFA. As discussed in this council year, the program is experiencing lower utilization of EFA and have emphasized the need for stability for PSS. Based on FY 25, RWS did not recommend this funding shift and requested that ARC revisit the funding scenario. RWS intended to use their "Additional Guidance to the Recipient" leeway to flex the funding back to level, however it was about \$7,000 over the leeway permission.

RWS requested that we keep the FY 25 level funding scenario based on the FY 26 Partial award. ARC voted to keep the level funding scenario, granting their request, and Exec affirmed this recommendation.

Topic D: Bylaws Edits Vote

Bylaws Edits – Edits made by Exec; Brought to Council February 2026

Section 4.4 Membership Term

- Add: *"Should a member not complete their current term of 24 months, and wish to reapply in the next term, their term limits would restart. Should a member not reach their maximum three consecutive terms, but step away for at least a year, their term limits would restart."*

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Section 4.6.1 Member Attendance

- Replace warning letter written by Mayoral Liaison with warning letter written by the Membership Representative(s): *"A member who accrues a total of three (3) unexcused absences from meetings (Planning Council and/or the member's assigned committee) will receive a warning letter for their absences from the Membership Representative(s) of the Planning Council."*

Section 4.6.2 Member Resignation & Removal

- Add: [If a member was removed for a cause] *"The member's term limit would restart, should they reapply and be appointed."*

Motion: Bryan Thomas

Second: Joey Carlesimo

Result: Unanimous approval

PCS reminds everyone that we need a 2/3rds majority vote for bylaws edits and thanks everyone for voting today. PCS reminds members that they can ask reach out to PCS at any time if they have additional questions about the bylaws.

Topic E: Mid-Year Survey Results Overview

PCS shares that they are now going to do a high-level overview of Mid-Year Survey results as reviewed by Exec last month. Please note that we will compare to last year as we are able, but we did update the response options for questions this year to be only 3 options rather than a 5-point scale to make responding easier and more efficient.

Not all data will be reviewed at this time, but all data will be available for your review after this meeting both in these slides as well as in a report format.

Who filled out the survey?

- 26 responses (76% of Council)

How long have you been on the Planning Council?

- 1-4 years
- 5-8 years
- 8+ years

70% of respondents have been on council for 1-4 years.

Do you feel the meetings are engaging?

- Definitely: 15
- Moderately: 9
- Not at all: 1
 - “too much repetition and mere reading of slides versus engaging conversation”

15 members left comments. Themes of the comments include:

- Appreciating PCS
- Appreciating that everyone has very different learning styles and there is a variety of ways information is presented
- Members wanting each other to participate/present more
- Reducing repetition
- Frustration with the density of meetings at times
- “The meetings have become increasingly more engaging among members. PCS team has done an excellent job in promoting interaction during the meetings- balancing data presentation and open-ended conversations to get discussions going on the findings to improve services; having in person events--such as volunteer opportunities and special events with showing the stigma movie; how sweeps are run and planning meetings. It is challenging running a hybrid environment to meet the needs of members who can't attend in person. Perhaps the use of small group discussions and then assigning a member to report back would enhance voices of all members.”

Do you have the support you need to participate in meetings?

- Definitely: 23
- Moderately: 3
- Not at all: 0

88.46% of members have the support they need to participate in meetings (Q3) and 88% are satisfied with the accessibility of materials/meetings (Q11)

11 members left comments. Themes include:

- 5 comments appreciating PCS or the ability to rely on PCS support
- Encouraging online participation
- Personal challenges with transportation and parking as a non-Consumer
- Continuing to make slides and materials accessible to those with visual impairments
- Request of less sensitivity of feelings and more direct/open conversations

On a scale of 0-10, how comfortable do you feel participating (sharing ideas or asking questions) during meetings? (0 being the least comfortable and 10 being very comfortable)

- Average answer: 8.12
- Last year's average: 8.38

To what extent do you feel the Council leadership has addressed member feedback, comments, or concerns?

- Definitely: 17
- Moderately: 6
- Not at all: 1

15 members left comments, including:

- 10 comments appreciating the responsiveness of PCS and/or Council leadership
- 3 comments related to the interpretation or misinterpretation of data by fellow members and how to navigate that in meeting or questions about data not being answered in full
- 1 comment calling back to their comment on a previous question
- 1 comment about being new to Council

How would you rate your knowledge of Basecamp?

- Very familiar: 13
- Somewhat familiar: 10
- Not at all familiar: 3

Comments:

- "It does take some time to know how to properly navigate Basecamp. I know there was a good review of navigating basecamp at the beginning of council year, but I think a mid year review of how to access documents, etc. would be helpful and provide added context for newer members."

What is your favorite aspect of Planning Council?

- Most members feel their favorite aspect is related to the connection to a shared mission, getting the work done, and building community. There were 5 separate mentions of in-person meetings!
- "Interacting with and learning from a diverse group of people, dedicated providing excellent services to people living with HIV."
- "I enjoy hearing data sets that are reflective of the community that I live and work in and how I can help increase intentional information sharing with communities that institutions and government agencies may not be able to do."
- "Teamwork and enthusiasm around a project; anti-stigma campaign, summit... I love when members are motivated to personalize their experience and lead projects. Really cool to see new members stepping up (especially to chair committees) and taking care of one another. Melanie's team has been so helpful. the way they present information and respond to PC questions and needs is very professional and educated."

- “The community its building. Bring together so many different voices from different walks of life all focused on the same goal.”

What is your least favorite aspect of Planning Council?

- Members cited things like agenda issues or data-heavy meetings (5 comments), lack of certain refreshments (2 comments), the timing or logistics of meetings (hybrid, traffic, or length) (5 comments), lack of participation from some members (2 comments), and repetition (2 comments) as their least favorite aspect of Planning Council.
- “I feel sometimes we have too many speakers or topics that are gone over at council meeting. That’s some of the topics I feel we could get more in depth in, but because we have another speaker, the information is not talked about or explained as well as it should be...”
- “Our time is very valuable, and sometimes we lose worktime due to conversations, or we lose discussion time, due to the workload needing review, etc. This is something that is normal and not an issue, just something I've noticed. No changes are necessary.”
- “I think sometimes the data we go over is not relevant, specifically all the demographics. I think we could use our time better. I think it's important to focus on trends and discussions... but overall, just stating the % of white, African American, etc. is not relevant in my opinion unless there is a trend or gap in service we should be focusing on.”
 - Comment from Exec discussion:
 - We won’t know the trends unless we explore this information!

How can we increase member engagement and make meetings more interesting?

- 5 respondents want to do more activities, small group work, etc.
- 8 respondents want more Kahoots!
- 6 respondents like the icebreakers:
 - Make them related to our work
 - More dynamic or physical/ sensory
 - One respondent requested LESS icebreakers or to make them optional

The layout of the meeting space is conducive to interaction

- 60% agree or strongly agree
- Themes of comments:
 - Try out different layouts in the room
 - Temperature of the room in non-profit

Other planning council members have made me feel welcome at meetings.

- 80.7% agree or strongly agree
- Themes of comments
 - More opportunities for introductions

The parking and travel directions from PCS to the meeting location were easy to follow.

- 76% agree or strongly agree
- Themes of comments
 - Dissatisfaction with the parking

There are adequate options for food and refreshments at meetings

- 76% agree or strongly agree
- Themes of comments
 - Limited food options
 - Wanting refreshments
 - Being mindful of allergies

Are you satisfied with the RWS Clinical Quality Management Part A Demographics presentations?

- Dissatisfied: 0
- Neutral: 7
- Satisfied: 19
- Comments:
 - “I think this has improved a lot and it the demographics are becoming more and more reflective to the strengths and weaknesses of the services being provided to the EMA.”
 - “Again, exemplary presentations this year. Succinct, relevant, and engaging.”

Are you satisfied with the Part A/MAI Spending and Utilization Presentations?

- Dissatisfied: 0
- Neutral: 3
- Satisfied: 23
- Comments:
 - “I think at the beginning of every presentation there should be review of what certain terms mean. If you are in person, it would be helpful to have a list of definitions as I do struggle at times remembering/understanding what certain terms mean.”

Suggestions for Improving PC meetings

Main themes of the Suggestions:

- 5 comments related to more discussion, or smaller group discussion
- 4 comments related to food or refreshments
- 2 comments – agenda or time related
- 2 comments – more in person meetings
- 2 comments – more social events
- 2 comments – stipends or incentives for members

What kind of agencies was that comment about?

- We’re not sure, but if you’re the person who left that comment, please let us know!

Executive Leadership Discussion:

To address clarity around data-heavy presentations and unanswered questions that float around Council topics:

- PCS and Exec affirm that demographic breakdowns of client data are intentional and central to the Planning Council's mission to surface trends and gaps in service.
- PCS, Council Chairs, and RWS should work together to ensure it is standard practice to bookend all presentations with key takeaways to orient conversation, make information more digestible, and help direct meaningful conversation.
- PCS will consider revisiting the “Parking Lot” or “FAQ” documents where follow up to questions asked during Council are addressed to the entire group after a meeting

To address themes of interpersonal interactions/empowering members to participate:

- PCS and Exec affirm that activities are and can remain optional, but that the overwhelming majority of Council members want PCS to include more games, Kahoots, group discussions etc. in meetings
- Exec discussed the possibility of randomly calling names during meetings when questions are asked to encourage members to participate more frequently and would like Council members opinions on that

- Exec also discussed the importance of reaching out to PCS if there are accessibility, logistical, or other issues preventing them from fully participating in Planning Council so they can help

Discussion:

- *A member says, please do not call on me randomly!*
- *A member says that it would be great to have a FAQ document with answers to questions when they're asked in meetings.*
- *Kim would like a video to help her get into the parking lot*
 - *Milaun offers to record a video on how to get to the Non-Profit Center*
- *Gerry says, I'd like to say that if you come up with an idea, you need to take charge of that idea. You're the best person to do that idea. We can't keep relying on PCS to execute single idea for us – we need to take charge if we as individual members want to start an initiative on Council.*
- *On the assigned seats comment, a member reports that when we were at the old south church, assigned seats helped him get to know everyone super well.*

Topic D: Priority Setting Activity Resources Training

What is Priority Setting?

Priority setting is deciding which HIV services are the most important according to the criteria established in the Eligible Metropolitan Area (EMA). All 28 Part A service categories must be prioritized annually [Health, Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) requirement!]. We are setting priorities for FY27.

We will also be setting priorities for the 6 approved Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI) categories in the EMA.

PCS reviews all of the basecamp and printed materials:

- PDF Ballots
- Priority Setting Criteria Tool
- Service Category Cheat Sheet
- Priority Setting Results History FY21-25
- Needs Assessment Data Overview
- Funding Streams Summary Slide Deck
- FY25 Year-to-Date Spending & Utilization Sheet

PCS then reminds everyone that the one resource not included in the packet is everyone's own lived experience. Every council member is encouraged to use their own personal and professional experiences to inform their priority setting rankings.

The Chair then presents the ground rules for priority setting:

Please put your final rankings in either the PDF form and send it to PCS or in the SurveyMonkey survey. The SurveyMonkey will go directly to PCS.

USE YOUR RESOURCES:

Utilize the best available, accurate, and detailed information to identify service gaps/emerging needs and determine how to best use Part A funds to fill gaps in care. The responsibility of the Council is to make recommendations as to Part A resources can be used, and incompleteness of data should not be used as a justification for not deciding.

GROUP AGREEMENTS:

Respect the group decision-making process. If your opinion differs from the final decision reached by the group, do not criticize or dismiss the group's final decision as incorrect or misinformed.
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PC BYLAWS:

Members are expected to follow the Planning Council's conflict of interest guidelines as defined by the Planning Council's Bylaws.

When service category scores are tied, the core service is listed above the non-core service.

PCS will tally up the final rankings incorporating all members' votes and present the results for a final vote on April 9th.

Topic F: Priority Setting Activity

All members take the rest of the meeting to fill out their priority setting ballots for all 28 Part A categories and the 6 Minority AIDS Initiative categories. SPEC members guide members through the resources available if asked for help.

Topic G: Announcements, Evaluation & Adjourn

The Chair reads out the announcements:

- Please fill out the meeting evaluation!
- Applications for the 26-28 term are open and due June 12
- THIS SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 5 – 9 PM: RUNWAY OF RESILIENCE AND HEALING AT EMMANUEL COLLEGE
 - The event will honor **two** of our members, Regina and Carla!
 - PCS will table at the event!
- MARCH 28, 9AM – 12 PM: KNOW BETTER, LIVE BETTER AT THELMA D BURNS BUILDING
 - PCS will be tabling at this event hosted by Curtis!
- MARCH 29, 12 – 3 PM: Native American Lifelines Annual HIV/AIDS Awareness Round Dance at UMass Boston

PCS shares that they would like to see everyone at these events in their new recruitment sweatshirts

Meeting to Adjourn

Motion: Bryan Thomas

Second: Kim Wilson

Result: The meeting was adjourned at 5:57 pm