

BRIDGING THE GAP SUB-COMMITTEE

301 N. Main St, Adrian, MI 49221
p: 517-264-4508 | f:517-264-4512



MEMBERS

Judge T. Morgan, Monica Hunt, Sarah Palmani, Garry Clift, Bronna Kahle, Terry Collins, Sheriff Troy Bevier, Kevon Martis, Tim Kelly

MEETING LOCATION

Commission Chambers

Second Floor, Old Court House
301 N. Main St,
Adrian, MI 49221

Minutes: Monday, August 18, 2025

I. Call to Order

Present: Jim Van Doren, Terry Collins

Also Present: Sheriff Troy Bevier, Community Development Coordinator Francine Zysk, Medical Examiner Office Manager Sarah Palmani, Health Officer Monica Hunt, Citizen Garry Clift, Mental Health Rep. Tim Kelly, Communications Coordinator Jen Ambrose, Admin. Coordinator Carissa Zubke, Melissa Vargas-Executive Director, Ryan Vargas Executive Vice President-McCullough Vargas & Associates

Absent: Kevon Martis, Judge Morgan, Bronna Kahle

The meeting was called to order at 2pm by Comm. Van Doren.

II. Approval of Minutes

A. Approval of Minutes: July 16, 2025

Motin by Collins to approve the minutes of July 16, 2025, seconded by Sheriff Bevier. Motion carried.

III. Old Business

No discussion.

IV. New Business

A. Recovery Community Center - McCullough Vargas & Associates

Introductions were provided by Ryan Vargas, Executive Vice President of McCullough Vargas & Associates, and Melissa Vargas, Executive Director.

McCullough Vargas & Associates has provided SUD services since 1990 and has been accredited since 1996. The organization is known for listening to and meeting community

needs. Recently, a Residential SUD program was created in Hillsdale and an Intensive Outpatient Program in Lenawee.

This proposal is for a Community Center. The objective is to establish a drop-in center for individuals in recovery. The Center would offer sober meeting spaces for support, networking, and personal development. It would also include rental space for community-driven events and fundraising. Individuals at all stages of recovery would be welcomed, along with friends, allies, community groups, and health and human services professionals.

Melissa reported that ProMedica Hickman saw approximately 31 people per month last year related to alcohol or substance-use disorders. Vargas discussed the limited number of sober social spaces currently available in Lenawee. Planned activities for the Center include digital literacy and employment workshops, peer support groups, monthly sober events, SMART recovery meetings (e.g., Recovery Dharma, SMART Recovery), and cross-promotional events with local businesses. The benefits of peer support were highlighted, including coping mechanisms, sober socialization, and community engagement.

The proposed budget is \$300,000, covering staffing, facility costs, program expenses, technology, and administrative costs. Sustainability would be achieved through a diversified revenue stream including fundraising, donations, volunteers, rental income from sober events, and educational workshops (e.g., parenting classes, smoking cessation). A timeline covering the first four quarters through Year 3 was reviewed. McCullough Vargas & Associates has received multiple letters of support for the Recovery Community Center.

A question was asked regarding billable services—what would be charged to clients? Vargas confirmed that those with insurance receiving billable services, such as therapy, would be billed. However, there would be no membership dues, and other services would be free to clients.

To date, Vargas stated they have not applied for additional funding but have researched potential grants. If the Community Center comes to fruition, staff would be moved from the current location into the new center. The Community Center would be housed in Adrian and would also welcome out-of-county residents. Vargas emphasized that the center would differ from the Residential SUD program in Hillsdale.

McCullough Vargas & Associates is accredited for Special Services for Women and is the only organization in Lenawee County offering this. The State of Michigan mandates this service for women and children, which includes specialized assessments, screenings, transportation, and childcare.

Discussion continued regarding confidentiality. Vargas explained that the proposed building has a long hallway with separate spaces for therapy, providing privacy and multiple entrances.

B. Peer Supports - McCullough Vargas & Associates

Ryan Vargas introduced the next proposal.

Peer Recovery Coaching has grown over the past 20 years and is considered a powerful resource for active recovery. Vargas discussed the value of connecting with a Peer Coach—someone with lived experience who understands similar struggles.

Currently, McCullough Vargas & Associates (MVA) employs Peer Coaches. In the past, they held small groups at the jail, and they hope to revisit this. MVA has also been in communication with ProMedica to provide services at the hospital. Vargas stressed the importance of meeting people where they are. With additional peer coaches, they would expand outreach to homeless encampments to provide education and resources.

The proposal includes hiring and training one full-time and three part-time Peer Recovery Coaches. Services would be provided to adults with SUD in Lenawee County at key locations including Adrian, Tecumseh, Morenci, Hudson, Blissfield, Addison, the jail, Share the Warmth, Catherine Cobb, and ProMedica Hospital.

Data from 2024 showed 449 treatment admissions in Lenawee and 368 hospital patients with SUD. Vargas noted these represent individuals who actively sought treatment.

The requested budget is \$165,000, primarily for personnel costs. Other expenses include training, certification, program operations/outreach, technology, and data management. Vargas confirmed that peer coaching is a billable service through Medicaid.

A question was raised regarding the administrative capacity to manage additional staff. Vargas outlined the existing team structure and confirmed adequate support. An additional goal is to support family members of individuals with SUD, including through parenting classes. Discussion also addressed stigma, with Vargas noting that education and peer coaches on the front lines are valuable resources.

When asked about client expenses, Vargas stated that peer coaching is billable, but uninsured clients would still receive services at no cost.

C. Transportation - McCullough Vargas & Associates

Ryan Vargas presented the Transportation Access Expansion Proposal, aligned with the Community Center and MVA's overall vision.

The proposal is to purchase a large vehicle to assist individuals in recovery, expanding access to treatment and outreach resources. This would address transportation barriers for those seeking recovery services. The target population includes adults with co-occurring mental health disorders, with focus areas such as Hudson, Morenci, Blissfield, Addison, Tecumseh, and Deerfield. Currently, Lenawee Transportation is limited, serving only 0.3% of residents.

MVA proposes to provide transportation for 30–50 clients per month, in addition to weekly outreach trips to homeless communities and rural towns. Data would be collected to measure outcomes.

The budget request is \$100,000, primarily for the vehicle purchase, with additional expenses for insurance, reserves, fuel, outreach equipment, and outfitting. Vargas noted that some insurers consider transportation a billable service. Sustainability would also be supported by operating funds and fundraising. Transportation services would be staffed by Peer Coaches.

Clients would not be charged for transportation outside of possible insurance billing, though donations would be accepted.

D. Infrastructure - McCullough Vargas & Associates

Melissa Vargas presented the Infrastructure Proposal. Founded in 1980, MVA has seen technology evolve dramatically. While some upgrades have been made, there are significant upgrades to modernize technology and infrastructure.

The proposal includes implementing a HIPAA-compliant telehealth platform, secure electronic health records with outcome tracking, updated hardware, a centralized scheduling system with client self-service, and a modern voice-over IP phone system with call routing and tracking.

Additional upgrades would improve administrative functions, including HR onboarding, payroll, compliance tracking, cloud-based storage, and collaboration tools. Each staff member requires 180–300 continuing education hours for licensing, and administrative software would improve efficiency.

This proposal, like the others, would serve Lenawee County clients, including adults with SUD, families, children, and court-referred individuals.

In 2022, 91% of behavioral health organizations provided telehealth services. Vargas noted that technology upgrades reduce human error, minimize compliance risks, ease administrative burden, improve billing accuracy, and support client learning.

The budget request is \$250,000 over 12 months: \$175,000 for telehealth, EHR, scheduling, hardware, cloud, and phones; \$75,000 for HR tools and cloud sharing. Sustainability would be maintained through ongoing operating budgets, cost savings, and billing improvements.

A question was raised about potential increased costs for clients. Vargas explained MVA's sliding fee scale and noted they are more likely to write off costs than pass them to clients.

Another question addressed collaboration with outlying areas. Ryan Vargas reiterated that the Community Center is a strong starting point and confirmed plans to expand services to surrounding townships in the future.

V. Public Comment

A board member asked how funding would be allocated and if there would be an audit process on the funding.

Comm. Van Doren stated that the subcommittee would come together and make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. Thereafter, the Board of Commissioners would have the ability to verify program verification.

VI. Adjournment

Motion by Collins to adjourn at 3:43pm, seconded by Clift. Motion carried.