

BRAVO Work Zoom

2023-09-27 6:30 -- 8pm Zoom Meeting

In attendance: Pula Ashley, Debbie Boyce, Claire Astone

Special guests:

June Sargent former BRAVO member and user of RJ forever

Damien Barnes: Rutland Director Rutland Community Justice Center

Invite was sent to Seth Hopkins, Heather Nelson, Cecil Reniche-Smith and Bill Moore

Introductions made across the group. Experiences shared by those present. Awareness that the language of RJ is becoming less negative by use of Respondent and Affected party. Criminal and victim both carry an all-encompassing labeling which does not allow for people to exist outside of this current situation in time.

June raised annual reports that afford the town the types and number of cases however Claire made a point about the smallness of the town and the attention to confidentiality. The chief of police meets weekly with the town manager and cases which arise could be shielded in that manner. More discussion advised.

June thought we should outreach to the major players in the community and ask about their perceived needs such as for schools, the community, and also see what their understanding is of the process for RJ.

Claire stated the time spent at Otter Valley with BRAVO under the support of June Sargent enabled great work window with youth. June was then an active school administrator. Entering into Otter Valley by BRAVO was done with the support of the chief of police, the town manager David Atherton and the School. It facilitated being in the community where the event evolved. The school was willing to provide a staff to represent the harm done. Youth then had a safe environment in which to carry out some of their chosen restorative acts.

Debbie, our longest RJ member began with Lance and Art who all left Rutland to operate in the Brandon community. She can remember being involved in a case as far back as 2009. June remembers being onboard in 2012. BRAVO has been present for well over a decade. Debbie also shared that the SB was not involved in managing BRAVO.

June reports that they did have an Advisory Board as is stated in the bylaws and made among the BRAVO membership with a chair, coordinator and secretary. To the best of our collective memory, the coordinator, is the conduit for cases from the police to us, was always able to function as a panelist as well. This is our current configuration.

(There is nothing prohibiting Coordinator from serving as a panelist in the bylaws.)

1. Be sure SB has current documentation so that they are more informed as to what our committee is to accomplish.

2. Clarify what expectations of the SB are regarding RJ. The Bylaws can be revisited or changed with the SB and the town attorney if there needs to be a better alignment of expectations and practice.
3. The past communications between BRAVO and the town have occurred with the police chief and the town manager. We have not been asked to make a verbal report to the select board as do other committees.
4. Confidentiality is a major anchor to our work and that this information may not be shared outside of the panel. Even the mentioning of a specific act by youth can be teased out by numerous citizens in the town. We need to be extremely cautious about case info.
5. The history of BRAVO has not been ever put into an official document. It is not clear at this time in history if anyone could do that accurately. We do know that the first BRAVO members came from training and panel work from Rutland. They established themselves in Brandon and served the community.
6. The Advisory Board which has been alluded to both by BRAVO and the SB, are in fact two differing entities. Per history, June reports that the Advisory Board has always been convened from within the active and trained group of BRAVO members. No one was selected by the SB. The town manager was to name the acting coordinator and per the bylaws, be approved by the SB. We are not clear that that has been the case.
7. Damien Barnes discussed resources which Rutland has which could benefit those involved in RJ. Such supports included victim support (harmed persons), substance program access, follow up supports after persons are free from incarceration, and work prep support. Rutland very invested in engaging youth through the school administration by in about the values of restorative practices vs suspensions or detentions. One such program, **Up for Learning** is a group empowering youth and adults to reimagine and transform education together. Damien is seeking to have this group come to our school districts as well.
8. Damien has invited us to visit and will be seeking to gather us into the fold for more statewide networking. He will get back to us after their next meeting about our invitation.
9. Ideas of doing a short survey regarding the needs of the schools or community groups and the police could be created and distributed.
10. June and Damien both believe that the practice of restorative circles and youth being empowered to speak to one another about behaviors and harm, is a very powerful and direct way for social interaction which improves the outcome for all. Things like bullying, mean comments, being disrespectful all fall into a social situation where positive change can occur from positive peer influence.
11. Rutland also has the ability to do assessments in community which better target needs.
12. Book which was highly recommended as a restorative journey Called Whirligig by Paul Fleischman
13. Agenda item for next BRAVO meeting is the naming of next Advisory Board leadership

Submitted by
Paula Ashley
Claire Astone
2023-09-30