

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from June 7, 2023, Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:30 pm, in person at the Center at the Heights.

Board in Attendance: Julie Stevens, Susan Patkin, Will Holland, Karen Mullen, Massiel Gallardo, Natalya Ly (new student representative)

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

School Resource Officer: Joseph Brienze

Ms. Shine introduced the new junior class representative to the Board, Natalya Ly who spoke briefly about her background.

Minutes May 10, 2023. Mr. Brienze made a motion to approve the May 10 minutes. Ms. Patkin seconded. The May 10 minutes unanimously approved by voice vote.

Select Board Goals 2023-2024 Discussion

The Board discussed the Select Board goals and discussed the addition of some mental health resources under the second bullet of Goal #4 Healthy and Socially Thriving. The Board noted that the entire Human Services division is seeing these needs. Ms. Shine will follow up on this and discuss the recommendations.

Discussion of Community Needs and Crisis Response

Ms. Shine discussed initiatives of the Online Safety Committee as the most recent Surgeon General report (executive summary distributed to the Board) as well as other regional surveys is showing that mental health declines with increased social media use. It remains important for young people to connect in person and understand the validity of social media. Students are on this committee which will help brainstorm ideas and possible programming going forward as not all social media uses are detrimental.

Ms. Shine discussed programming around substance use and misuse - the Hidden on Plain Sight exhibit helps parents understand signs of substance use. Board members who attended the exhibit noted that it was very helpful. There was also a brief discussion of xylazine laced fentanyl in recent overdose deaths throughout Massachusetts.

Update on Programs, Services and Awards

Ms. Shine noted the department has 65 active clients with 42 on the wait list and 13 parent/community consultations this past month. These involved both insecure housing issues and health insurance loss. There were also 5 emergency consultations. Staff provided a significant amount of case management services to residents who needed assistance in unusual situations.

The group work is going well as the school year finishes. Two groups at Pollard taught social skills and friendship development. The coffee talks at the high school continues to progress well. The grief/coping skills group at Pollard will continue in the fall with referrals to Jeff's Place as there is a core group of students who have lost siblings and/or parents.

Summer Groups

Youth & Family Services is meeting and planning summer groups. Staff hope to run another Candid Conversations group for elementary students and a group for 6th graders. Ellen is also looking into some Saturday workshops for Middle School students.

Youth & Family Services is helping set up the **Junior Police Academy** for the police department. This free four-day program is offered for youth rising to 8th grade and will explore police related activities such as K-9 and Community Resource Dog units, SWAT, Honor Guard, patrol and detective work. Youth will be active participants and have an opportunity to learn about and experience first-hand the duties of different roles within a police department.

Youth & Family Services is working closely with Family Access Community Connections about the possibility of running a 9-week Circle of Security Parenting workshop in the fall. This workshop is for parents and caregivers based on decades of research about how secure parent-child relationships can be supported and strengthened. Facilitators work with parents and caregivers to help them to understand their child's emotional world by learning to read emotional needs, support their child's ability to successfully manage emotions, enhance the development of their child's self-esteem, honor their innate wisdom and desire for their child to be secure.

Youth & Family Services is working with Engaging Minds to run 2 workshops over the summer helping students learn skills for the return to school. These workshops will be aimed at transitional ages for Middle School students. The details are still being discussed.

Youth & Family Services is working closely with Family Access Community Connections about the possibility of running a 9-week Circle of Security Parenting workshop in the fall. This workshop is for parents and caregivers based on decades of research about how secure parent-child relationships can be supported and strengthened. Facilitators work with parents and caregivers to help them to understand their child's emotional world by learning to read emotional needs, support their child's ability to successfully manage emotions, enhance the development of their child's self-esteem, honor their innate wisdom and desire for their child to be secure.

Peer Tutor and Peer Mentoring have both come to an end. Both programs were full to capacity and had a very successful school year. Staff will be assessing these programs over the summer to make program recommendations and improvements.

Youth & Family Services will continue this year. This program is an opportunity for middle and high school students to give back to the community while also getting their needed community service hours. We had over 15 volunteers who joined Youth & Family Services at the Needham Fire Station and the Charles River Center. Staff are in the process of planning for the Summer and securing locations for 6 days.

Teen Mental Health First Aid will be taught to the 10th grade next year with available staff. The staff will be stretched providing it but all the health and wellness high school teacher will be trained during

the class and can help teach in the 2024-2025 school year.

Ms. Shine noted that staff continue to be very active on the various committees including the homeless prevention committee, the Online Safety Coalition, Overdose Awareness Day, Chapter 84, Substance Prevention Alliance of Needham, The Domestic Violence Action Committee, The community Crisis Intervention Team, Youth Resource Network, Youth Services Committee, and the Community Health resource Group.

Ms. Shine noted she continues to use Interface to provide more community counseling services. As of July 1, Youth will not be the gatekeeper to this service so any Needham resident can set up their own appointment.

Ms. Shine noted she has two interns starting in the fall, one from Boston College and one from Smith, which should assist with the wait list. The great thing is that the person from Smith has 4 days and that is unusual availability for an intern.

2023-2024 Meeting Schedule Vote

The following meeting dates were proposed: All Wednesdays. September 13, October 11, November 8, December 13, January 10, February 14, March 13, April 10, May 8 and June 12th.

Ms. Patkin made a motion to accept the 2023-2024 meeting dates. Ms. Gallardo seconded. The meeting dates were confirmed by unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Patkin made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Gallardo seconded the motion. Unanimous vote to adjourn by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 6:15 pm

Notes by: Faith Crisley, Recording Secretary
Edited by: Sara Shine, Director