

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from October 13, 2021, Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:30 pm, on the Needham Common

Board in Attendance: Susan Patkin, Karen Mullen, Kevin Keane, David Bookston, Julie Stevens, Jill Mullaney

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Motion to Approve September 13 Minutes made by David seconded by Jill. Minutes unanimously approved.

Fees were discussed. Ms. Shine has not billed for peer tutor during 2020-2021 due to pandemic. Since the employment listings are mainly to help seniors maintain their homes such as lawn mowing or snow shoveling Ms. Shine recommends not charging for these. MS. Stevens made a motion to approve the fee schedule but remove the fee for the employment listings. Mr. Bookston seconded. The Board unanimously approved.

Mr. Bookston made a second motion to keep the other three fees at the same rate as 2020-2021. Ms. Stevens seconded this motion. The board unanimously approved. Fees are peer tutor \$45.00 per year; Family Fun Night \$25.00 per night; and Wilderness \$25-\$35.00 per program. Ms. Shine reiterated that if any family is not able to pay for these services, the fee is waived at the request of a parent/caregiver.

Update on Racial and Health Equity Draft

Ms. Shine mentioned that the Health and Human Services division as a whole continues to work on assessment policies.

Ms. Shine shared an HHS racial and health equity policy with the board. Mr. Bookston made a motion to adopt draft as is. Mr. Keane seconded this motion. The Board unanimously approved the equity draft as is.

Discussion of Effect on COVID 19 Mental Health

Y&FS has made requests of the APPA Funds (The American Rescue Plan 2021) towards mental health support for 2 years. The Board of Health has been able to access some of these funds and is in strong support of the use for mental health.

This will especially assist towards addressing racial inequities and LGBTQIA+ issues that have arisen during the pandemic. There is much distrust in the systems and isolation has tended to exacerbate these issues. A general discussion ensued on barriers to care.

Ms. Shine noted that overall, there has been an increase in the acuity of care needs in both the Youth department and the schools.

There was a discussion of increased mental health needs, increased fights and negative social media usage and an overall lack of unity in the school community.

Ms. Shine mentioned the Youth Mental Health First Aid class is helping adults identify youth with mental health needs and how to intervene in addition to helping people identify the difference between normal adolescence and signs of serious issues. This class has been a huge success as a number of adults have been trained. The hope is that Needham can become a community where the majority of adults who interact with youth are trained, just as they are with CPR.

Ms. Shine and Katrina Martyn, a School Personal Counselor, will present this coming Sunday about the impact of COVID-19 on mental health, racial inequities and how parents/caregivers can intervene. Ms. Shine will talk about Youth Mental Health First Aid in this presentation as a way to get more residents aware of the opportunity for this training. This program is sponsored by Temple Aliyah with Equal Justice Needham.

Community News/Crisis Response Update

SALSA has reported at the high school a big increase in substance use especially now that everyone is back in the school. Youth & Family Services is working very closely with SPAN to address these issues. Ms. Shine mentioned the MetroWest data is not yet available but the results will be very interesting to analyze.

Update on Programs/Services

Ms. Shine noted she has finished the interviewing for the two clinical positions and offers have been made. There are two full time positions and one 25 hour a week part time position. The full time person beginning November 1st is a trauma expert; the full time person beginning November 15 has a background in substance misuse. The goal is to have these new clinicians start picking up individual clients and create various groups fairly quickly to best support the community.

The employment and volunteer program are on hold due to staffing issues. The hope is that we can get this program running again when the new Administrative Assistant starts. This program is aimed at helping residents hire youth for various projects and helping local businesses post open employment opportunities.

Ms. Shine noted that there have been some donations through the website for programs in addition to contributions for the Crisis Donation Fund, which helps support families in need.

Forde Award update-the family is likely to prefer the virtual platform especially given COVID and the fact that people joined from other parts of the US and beyond in January 2020.

Engaging Minds is November 4. This presentation is focused around executive functioning and after an unconventional school year due to Covid, students have returned to school full-time and are reacclimating to a more rigorous and demanding academic program and schedule. During Covid and now beyond, executive function skills have become increasingly

important for students of all ages. This presentation is aimed at helping parents learn actionable strategies to use at home to help strengthen executive function skills to keep them on a successful path this school year and beyond.

The mural behind Pollard is still on hold due to pending MBTA approval. Ms. Shine is hoping to finish the plan this fall and paint in the spring. Ms. Shine has already started to recruit students and local artists to help with this project. The project will focus on unity and social justice with a hope of involving a large number of community members as the last project included over 100 people.

Ms. Shine emphasized that Y&FS is working with a community member on helping to host a **Needham Paintfest Project** through the Foundation for Hospital Art. The Foundation for Hospital Art was established in 1984 and is dedicated to involving patients and volunteers worldwide to create colorful, soothing artwork donated to hospitals to help soften the often stressful hospital experience. The event would include youth and families who may have some special needs to come together and create a piece of art that will then be donated to a local hospital.

All ongoing programs including Peer Tutor, VIP (the Peer Mentor Program) and Volunteers Around Needham are all running smoothly.

The Program registration system called MyRec is up and running. Initial trainings have occurred and some programs will be put into the system this fall. It is a partnership with Park & Recreation who is already using it and the COA which will in March 2022.

New/Old Business

The two full time clinicians will be introduced to the Board at a later date.

Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Bookston made a motion to adjourn at 6:20 pm seconded by Me. Patkin. The board unanimously voted to adjourn at 6:20 pm

Next meeting November 10 on the Common weather permitting or the Highland Room

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

