

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from September 9, 2020 Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:30 pm, via Zoom per Governor Charles Baker order of March 2020 during COVID Crisis

Board in Attendance: Susan Patkin, David Bookston, Julie Stevens, Kevin Keane, Josh Tuttelman, Arina Collin, Adrienne Anderson (via phone)

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Motion to Approve June 10, 2020 Minutes made by David seconded by Josh. Minutes unanimously approved.

Budget/Staffing Discussion

Ms. Shine noted that the budget had been approved as written with a slight increase in programming costs. The computerized medical record system is in the budget and also My Rec for online registration. She noted that because of COVID there will not be much needed for materials or food which along with careful spending will allow the Department to work within the budget. Expansion of programming and clinical services will continue. A part-time clinician will be needed as some PT staff have cut back their hours and 2 have left. Ms. Shine is going to advocate for this position to be posted again (although there is a "hiring frost" in the town. There is a possibility of budget cuts in the next fiscal year and Ms. Shine will update the Board as the year advances. The new Children's Hospital branch near Trip Advisor is still interested in funding the Youth Department; Ms. Shine is writing a proposal showing what the money would be used for.

Community Needs and Crisis Response

Ms. Shine noted that as COVID drags on there is likely to be the need for more clinical services including anxiety and depression. Ms. Shine noted many young people and families are tapped out on Zoom and virtual/hybrid school. The Department plans continued mental health outreach. Her goal is to find creative ways to keep people engaged and get them access to services.

Ms. Shine noted there have been two youth suicides in nearby towns so her team will be watching with the guidance and counseling staff at the high school for any needs within Needham. The students on the board noted that early in the spring the quarantine effected more people; because people have been able to move around a bit more recently it does not seem to be as severe. It was noted that some students have a fear that their parents will get sick and the dangers come from the world at large moving on.

Members noted that as the weather worsens the sense of isolation is going to grow on everyone and that will make the winter both hard and worrisome. Also, that with a second

wave many people will be isolated again, and the needs will grow when/if that happens. There was discussion about there has been an increase in suffering from families who had mental health issues before COVID.

It was also noted that for many young people interactions occur at school and not being able to be there has its own challenges. Without school many kids have no way to get out of the house/how to reach out to them.

It was noted that there is the general sense of exhaustion from the face mask wars and everything that is going on within the country and the world at large.

Ms. Shine noted that many residents feel bombarded with information and so how to message the services in a way that will cut through the noise may change. Board members liked the idea of a challenge day built into the school schedule where family groups can discuss their issues and use the breakout room feature to help with disseminating a large amount of information. This will help identify kids who needs extra support.

Ms. Shine noted that SPAN Youth Action team has released an initiative in which students can reach out to guidance anonymously about another student they may be concerned about (for whatever reason). Ms. Shine was also part of a larger guidance group and initial mental health assessment were created and will be give out to all students at the beginning of the in person school year. This assessment will hopefully highlight areas of concern and needed supports.

SALSA is involved with leadership trainings around tobacco vaping. Chap. 84 helps youth battle the tobacco industry. (SALSA leader is the head of 84.)

David noted the high school staff was trained today (9/9) by a trauma specialist with a list of resources. Middle and elementary school staff were also trained by Riverside Trauma Center today.

Members noted that it was important future parent trainings focused on how to assist students with pandemic resiliency, signs of depression and substance abuse. Ms. Shine noted that the grant from Metrowest Health Foundation should help fund the parent trainings throughout the year. Riverside may also have trainers available in addition to other community members.

Updates—Programs, Services and Awards

Self-Care Needham will be scaled back to every few days or once a week.

Resiliency Project—was successful in getting the community involved in a project.

Social Distancing Calendar not as needed as May-August. This calendar will be revisited.

The Engaging Minds (Executive function skills) will be conducted again. The first time was fall 2019. The event is on October 27th. Services families can access will be discussed.

Programs with COA

Bridging the Gap has had stops and starts as some seniors struggled with technology. Possible future collaborations will be discussed.

Phone Pal has enjoyed more success and will be continue with ease on a weekly basis also advertised by Needham Cable Channel.

Peer Tutoring is experiencing explosive growth as it lends itself to the virtual world; September/October will have rolling admissions.

VIP is also proceeding virtually for both bigs and littles. It will begin in early November.

Volunteers Around Needham

Summer was successful. Currently it does not have specific projects, but students are writing individual proposals for winter to build on the summer success. Some of the ideas include playground cleanups, book readings to younger kids, a donation drive for an animal shelter and greeting cards for nursing home and hospital residents.

There was also a discussion on Fun for Kids groups for kids on Zoom. Summer was a success; how to get supplies to participants houses.

Staffing

Ms. Shine noted that two interns had started Rohan Roberts-Goldman who is an expressive art therapist from Leslie University and Kelsey Nichols from the Boston College School of Social Work.

The department has been building its social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Within Community Groups

CCIT—is operating but may increase numbers of meetings in the winter.

Youth Reserve network began again in September

Luca Mancino won **Ray of Hope award** via zoom. He received great press.

School Workshop Update

Ms. Shine is having ongoing discussion not sure if they will be virtual or will take a year off. Crisis intervention team from Youth may or may not be back in the schools; she has not yet been informed of school's final decision.

Questions

Members brought up programs to address Black Lives Matter and racial inequities.

Ms. Shine noted Real Coalition conducted by Gary Bailey will be training high school teachers; not sure yet how town wide the rest of the training will be.

Members noted that with parents losing jobs the kids are missing school more and there won't be outreach available through having kids in school everyday. People fall into 2 groups those flooded with resources and those who are isolated.

Members discussed issues of isolation and hibernation issues with being on a virtual platform all day – how youth can take breaks and stay connected. Mental health is being impacted significantly and with colder weather there is also concerns around seasonal depression. There needs to be a balance between health and safety but also having those social connections.

Members discussed other routes that people are using to connect – it was noted the acapella groups are working remotely towards a December 12 online performance; other groups/subgroups need these virtual goals. The strategy of family dinners might help.

Ms. Shine mentioned trying to find creative ways to get people out and be active – various challenges. Members discussed advertising the many free workouts on Youtube and elsewhere. Without sports students will be missing the self-esteem element and a reason to work out.

New/Old Business

None.

A motion to adjourn at 6:20 pm was made by David, seconded by Arina. Unanimous decision to adjourn at 6:20 pm

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