

**CITY OF NORWALK
YOUTH SERVICES
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 8, 2010**

ATTENDANCE: Peter Wien, Shirley Sarkin, Jessica Fogg, Candace Mayer; Darlene Young. Anna Duleep (4:15 p.m.)

STAFF: Linda Wilock, Youth Services Director, Jason Getner, Juvenile Review Board

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Wien called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF APRIL 6, 2010

**** MS. MAYER MOVED THE MINUTE OF APRIL 6, 2010.**

**** MS. FOGG SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

JUVENILE REVIEW BOARD ISSUES

Mr. Getner said that at the last meeting, there were 32 cases, now there are 88 cases with more pending. There has been an up tick in almost all of the categories. The mentor grant is now in place. Thirty two of the active cases have to do with truancy. He said that while truancy is against the law, there is not much that the JRB can do. The Juvenile Court will be relocating in Bridgeport and many of the truancy cases are being referred back to the JRB. The majority of the cases are currently between 14-16 years old. He then said that if anyone has any suggestions on how to reach out to these youth, he would be most grateful.

The discussion then moved to whether these youth could be integrated into the summer jobs program. Ms. Young said that over 500 youth had applied and that 485 had turned up for interviews. The funding is just not there for more than 100 students. The funding comes from grants and donations.

Mr. Getner then gave a quick overview of the other cases, such as cyber-bullying, physically bullying, and other issues. Ms. Sarkin asked about how the schools were dealing with the issue. Mr. Getner said that the currently, there are no laws on the books about cyber-bullying, so they refer the cases to the JRB. Each school has a zero tolerance policy towards cyber-bullying, but each school handles the cases on their own.

Ms. Duleep joined the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

The discussion then shifted back to truancy. Mr. Getner says that when he asks the students why they won't go to school, they usually shrug and say, "I don't know". When the students are told their cases may go to court and a probation officer would be involved, frequently they say that their buddy has one and it is no big deal. Ms. Young pointed out that occasionally that there is something that happens with a group dynamic that brings out positive things. She then gave an example about how the youth responded to one individual who was wearing his clothing inappropriately. The group members checked the individual's clothing every time he was at the meeting and would tell her if they didn't think the individual's clothing was appropriate.

Ms. Fogg asked how many absences a student can have before being declared truant. Mr. Getner said that after three unexcused absences, the student gets an "H" which means that they can't make it up in summer school. Once this happens, the student has no incentive to go back to school.

Mr. Wien asked whether the students were being stressed out by world events or other subjects. Mr. Getner said that last year, they were able to have a number of excellent speakers on different topics that addressed world and current issues.

When asked for her ideas, a student who was present said that she didn't understand why someone would want to skip school. She said that she felt that a lot of the issues are stemming from the home situations. Ms. Young said that there had been an ex gang member who came in to speak to the outreach group and felt that there was some real benefit in hearing speakers like this. Mr. Getner said that the recent speaker had been incarcerated for 21 years, and there was an individual in the group who pretended to sleep through the presentation.

Ms. Mayer asked if there was a parent support group. Mr. Getner said that he like the idea. Ms. Mayer said that by having a group, more people would receive services at the same time. Mr. Getner said that many of the parents are struggling to make ends meet and working two or three jobs.

MENTORING GRANT VIDEO

Ms. Young then showed a video of the mentoring program. It is on the City website and has been broadcast on Channel 79. Ms. Young explained that the current program was a partnership between the Human Service Council and SAVE, Rev. Dancy's program. She said that the goal would be to have thirty matches by the summer. The grant requires 60 matches. Discussion about the details then followed.

Ms. Young said that the program was just getting started and that everyone would hear more about the mentoring program. Once the matches are made, it will be up to both groups to do the tracking. Ms. Young said that the tracking will be done through a program called Civic Corps. Ms. Young said that she was very excited with all the responses that had come in after the newspaper article was published.

Ms. Young said that she had hoped to get a grant to have some of the youth work with the Conservation program, but the City did not receive the grant funding. Ms. Young said that she had wanted to get some cleaning projects underway such as Cranbury Park. Supervision is a problem. Mr. Wien suggested Ms. Young contact the Friends of Cranbury Park. Ms. Duleep said that her mother has a standing order with SAVE for volunteers at Ryan Park.

OTHER

When asked for an update on the budget, Ms. Wilock said that the budget has been approved and it was basically status quo. The Early Childhood program has been moved to a different department, but the Youth Services funding has remained intact. The JRB program is up and running and she hope for an additional year of funding. Mr. Getner said that they would surpass the original goals and objectives easily.

Ms. Wilock said that when the Juvenile Court moves to Bridgeport, probation will still have a presence in Norwalk. Ms. Wilock reminded that the parents have to appear at court up to as many as eight times.

NEXT MEETING

Ms. Wilock said that frequently, during the summer, things calm down. The next meeting will be scheduled in September.

Mr. Wien said that this may be his last meeting as chair because of a job relocation.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. SARKIN MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MS. MAYER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services