

**CITY OF NORWALK
YOUTH SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD
MARCH 29, 2011**

ATTENDANCE: Shirley Sarkin, Chair; Candace Mayer, Darlene Young,
Jessica Fogg, Maria Borges-Lopez, Betty Karkut.

STAFF: Linda Wilock, Youth Services Director;
Jasen Getner, Juvenile Review Board.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Sarkin called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 21, 2010

Ms. Sarkin stated that the spelling of Jasen's name should be corrected under attendance.

- ** MS. MAYER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF
DECEMBER 21, 2010 WITH CORRECTED, AS NOTED.**
- ** MS. YOUNG SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

AGENCY UPDATES

Norwalk Housing Authority

Ms. Mayer reported that the Norwalk Housing Authority is working on The Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant for the Washington Village neighborhood revitalization. She gave an overview of the grant and stated that this is a matching grant of \$250,000. She explained that this is an extensive project that includes four Steering Committees including Housing, Education, Neighborhood Planning and Non-Profit Agencies.

Ms. Sarkin asked about the timing and location, and Ms. Mayer replied between 12-24 months for planning and implementation for the project that covers Water Street through Martin Luther King Drive.

Mayor's Summer Youth Employment

Ms. Young said that the program is underway with over 480 applications and she expects to have over 250 summer jobs. She distributed a new brochure on the program and stated that the Chamber of Commerce Business Institution helped with the development. She highlighted that the brochure features a former member of the program who is now the Director of the ACHIEVE program Ms. Borges-Lopes noted that a grant of \$15,000 was approved from SNEW, and Ms. Sarkin commented that this is a great show of support for the program.

Norwalk Social Services

Ms. Karkut reported that they have applied for two grants of private funding for school-based programs based on behavioral health issues. She explained that there is an increased need to address the issues resulting from the economy with job loss and foreclosures that are having an impact on youth with carrying a burden of financial stress. She added that these issues affect areas of domestic violence and programs are needed to help the kids deal with anger and stress. Ms. Karkut added that in particular Briggs High School has had more incidents and behavior issues and she wonders if this can be attributed to Principal Elaine Lane's upcoming retirement.

Ms. Wilock added that Lt. Gonzalez had called her to say he could not attend the meeting, but wanted to report that they have come along way with the issue on the closing of the DCF offices. He wanted to thank Senator Duff and Representative Cafero for their assistance, and the closing has been rescinded. Members commented on the sense of relief, as this agency really needs to stay in Norwalk. The new location has not yet been announced, but Ms. Wilock stated that she heard that it was going to be on High Street.

Community Violence Issues

Mr. Getner reported that A Stop the Violence and Bridge the Gap meeting was held in the Community Room at City Hall a week ago and the organizers' aim was to bring together various community agencies and anti-violence groups for the common goal of coordinating services for youths.

He stated that despite the advice for the public to attend the meeting with an open mind and focus on presenting pro-active ideas for stopping the violence, instead it turned into a finger-pointing session with reactive comments about a lack of trust with the Police Department and who is to blame for the increase in crime.

A discussion ensued on establishing a goal of reaching out to youth at a younger age where they are more trainable and there is a better success rate of making a difference. Ms. Wilock added that the Mayor spoke about the stop the violence meeting on Thursday during a press conference addressing the Norwalk Hospital shooting. Mr. Getner stated that the stop the violence effort includes involvement by Police Officer Sean Wong Wong, who has been instrumental in addressing the issues and increasing awareness of the Crime Tip Hotline and new anonymous e-mail options.

Ms. Sarkin suggested that this issue was a segway to the mentoring update and asked to move the order of the agenda to put that as the next item.

Update on Mentoring Programs

Ms. Young stated that they continue having a difficult time recruiting mentors, and that despite those that do agree to start, end up delaying their commitment due to work-related timing issues, etc. She added that it is a diverse group that is hard to mesh and match the mentee with a mentor, and she continues to work with the School Liaisons which are usually the School Social Worker or School Psychologist.

She spoke about a new video entitled "What can you do in 60 Minutes" with the goal of communicating that a difference can be made in the time it takes to have lunch, or watch TV. She is encouraged that this message will bring some vitality to the program and will communicate the message of the many benefits of becoming a mentor.

Ms. Sarkin asked about newspaper articles to promote mentoring, and Ms. Young replied that even at the 25 year anniversary of Mentoring event, only the weekly papers covered and that the Hour did not attend. She expressed disappointment at a statement from the Hour relative to “how many articles can they actually do on mentoring?”

Ms. Young stated that on-going efforts are in place to partner with business and corporations with the Mayor’s Mentoring Challenge program along with referrals from Reverend Dancy on those individuals who have experience with the “system” to be a part of mentoring to youth in Norwalk. She added that the YMCA provides good support along with Building Futures to solicit and build positive mentoring relationships.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Ms. Wilock asked Mr. Getner to provide a review of the Juvenile Review Board.

Mr. Getner stated that there continues to be the communication process of informing the agencies that they are not a referral program, but that they do continue to work with the schools in providing prevention measures. He provided an example of the assessment for programs on school interventions that covers the modeling of graduated responses. He added that there is an effort to decrease the amount of suspensions and increase to in-school suspension and detention programs, along with protocols for police activity on school grounds.

A discussion ensued on the subject of follow-up on referrals. Ms. Mayer stated that often times it is difficult to obtain a release of the private information and Ms. Karkut commented that with budget cuts, it is difficult with fewer resources to maintain follow-up procedures on tracking referrals.

Ms. Wilock gave an overview of the budget and stated that grants have enabled the funding of the two part-time positions providing a part time assistant to work with Mr. Getner.

Ms. Fogg stated that the Outward Bound program is in place again for the coming year, and applications have been sent out to sophomores at the schools. She gave Youth Services Advisory Board

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an overview of the program that the skills are cooperation-based and team building, trust skills, where the group spends 16 days in the wilderness in the Delaware Water Gap area from June 26 – July 10, 2011.

JRB UPDATE

Mr. Getner reported that a statistical compilation of data was attached, noting that as mentioned last month, the youngest client, age 7, has been submitted, and number of the cases are shoplifting related cases.

Mr. Getner said that the JRB may become regional and that Westport and Wilton's expressed interest is moving forward with referring their cases to the Norwalk JRB. The details of this are still being discussed. Ms. Wilock pointed out that state-wide, the emphasis is on regional concepts.

Ms. Wilock said that renewals of grant applications are in process, which had been presented last month. She explained these grants are for training programs to deal with anger, and reviewed that there are three facets to the program: Structures Learning Techniques (SLT); Anger Control Training (ACT) and Moral Reasoning (MR). The groups run ten weeks and are segregated by age and sex. The items addressed in the course include: dealing with peer pressure, making pro-social complaints, and controlling impulsiveness in one hour sessions three times a week.

Ms. Wilock said that she has some staffing issues relative to the training, and Community Solutions will now do the training of the facilitators. Ms. Mayer added that the Norwalk Housing Authority was interested in joining this training program, and Ms. Wilock replied that it would result in a higher quality program, and she is hoping for training implementation.

BUDGET

Ms. Wilock stated that she hopes to have a formal budget approval that reflects Jason's position in the City budget as a regular item. She added that the Mayor continues to provide an element of advocacy for the Youth Services, as he is a big supporter of the youth programs in the city.

Police/School Grant Award and Code of Conduct

Ms. Wilock stated that she hopes to partner with Westport on the Police grant and she is working on a renewal of the grant initiatives that have already been received to help with position funding within the budget.

ART Grant Update

Ms. Wilock stated that ART stands for Anger Replacement Therapy and is a federal grant that goes along with the Gang Prevention grant. She added that there have been some staff changes and Dave Walenczick will not be continuing with this program and that most likely training will be done by Jasen or an intern to run groups that are gender specific.

New Gang Prevention Grant Application

Ms. Wilock stated that this is the same initiative and is a Department of Justice program that will help fund the JRB services and provide an assistant for Jasen.

Other

Ms. Karkut stated that this was a good meeting and she is encouraged by the programs that are in the works. Ms. Sarkin stated that the next meeting would be in late May, and Ms. Wilock added that the fifth week works out well as it does not conflict with other meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. KARKUT MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MS. FOGG SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Knox,
Telesco Secretarial Services