

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2023**

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Members of the public who wish to "view the meeting live" and/or provide "live comments" can use the Zoom meeting platform by clicking on the "Zoom" link that is on the line with the meeting date and time. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the “raise your hand indicator” and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section.

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Members of the public who wish to provide public comments are encouraged to submit those comments to the meeting staff person via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Lamond Daniels at ldaniels@norwalkct.org to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: David Heuvelman, Chair; Nicol Ayers; Gregory Burnett; Diana Revulus;
Barbara Smyth

STAFF: Deanna D'Amore, Health Director; Brian Weeks, Epidemiologist;
LaToya Fernandez, Chief Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer;
AnaVivian Estrella, Human Services Director

1. CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Mr. Heuvelman called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and called the Roll as indicated above.
A Quorum was present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no members of the public present who wished to comment this evening.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON MARCH 16, 2023

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED**
**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. BURNETT)**

4. DISCUSSION

a. Updates from the Health Department

Deanna D'Amore, Health Director

Ms. D'Amore reported that May 11, 2023 marked the end of the covid public health emergency, but they will continue to keep a close eye on it. Most of the resources that were dedicated to responding to covid will be transitioned to traditional health care.

Brian Weeks, Epidemiologist

Mr. Weeks shared his screen and updated the Committee. He said that as of May 18th there are 46 people in the hospital for covid, which is very good news. He said that all of the country is pretty mild and all of New England is in the green. They are; however, keeping an eye on subvariants.

Type B Influenza in Connecticut is at a high rate of activity, but there are very low hospitalizations.

There have been clusters of M Pox (formerly Monkey Pox) cases noted in Chicago. People who are at a greater risk need to be mindful and get vaccinated.

Mr. Weeks presented tic born surveillance and noted that people need to avoid areas where they can be exposed to tics. He emphasized the need to check pets for tics. He said that mosquito activity will pick up.

b. Updates from LaToya Fernandez, Chief Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer

Mr. Heuvelman welcomed Ms. Fernandez. Ms. Fernandez shared her screen and gave an update on her initiatives, including starting a language program. She said she plans to hold three per year and is looking for a Haitian Creole teacher.

The language access line will be housed in the DEI office. Ms. Fernandez said she has been able to raise a yearly stipend for the interpreter. She added that she will be getting a Babble subscription so employees can learn different languages.

Ms. Fernandez said there is a big emphasis on youth and providing them with services and support. Youth services is part of the suspension, expulsion process. She said the Hearing Officer was excited about the partnership with the City. She said she is looking to host a youth civic event.

Ms. Fernandez said her office partners with Human Resources to make sure new employees get connected. She said she just did a DEI style training in the workplace that focused on racism in the workplace. She said she will be scheduling safety training around active shooter and will have anti bias training coming up. Ms. Fernandez reported that she has been a support for a number of employee relation issues with staff that identify as a minority.

Ms. Fernandez discussed the Equity and Justice for All committee that she wants to roll out. This will be an internal commission that will review procedures and practices to be sure they align with a DEI focus. She added that they will have representatives from the Board of Estimate and Taxation, Board of Health, Commission on Women, the Housing Authority, the Fire and Police Commissions, Planning and Zoning and Transit. She reviewed the focus of the commission.

Ms. Fernandez asked if there were any questions. Mr. Heuvelman thanked her for her presentation and asked if the Chair of each of those commissions will sit on the Commission. Ms. Fernandez, said she wants it to be diverse, so the chair of these commissions will not necessarily sit on the Commission. Each commission can determine the best person to be on the Commission.

Ms. Revolus noted that Black and Brown children are getting expelled over their counterparts. She told Ms. Fernandez that she could help with Haitian Creole. She added that if someone has a Library card, they have free access to Rosetta Stone and the City already has a language line.

Ms. Ayres said she had questions about the unreadiness regarding the formation of the Equity and Justice for All Commission. She asked about the community component for the Commission since Ms. Fernandez already identified established entities in the City. Ms. Fernandez explained that before going to the community they have to take care of the inside so they can go outside. These representatives on the Commission will have strong ways of interacting with the public to get feedback and this will be a way to reach more people.

Ms. Ayres said the community and particularly, the underserved community has been waiting a substantial amount of time for this Commission; about two years.

Ms. Ayres told Ms. Fernandez that there are things she is doing that are outstanding, but wants to be sure she is not re-inventing the wheel. She said she had faith that Ms. Fernandez will get up the hill, but has concerns about where she is going. She said the community needs to look at the information on the Commission.

Mr. Burnett asked Ms. D'Amore if the Health Department is going to send a communication to the residents to let them know that the covid crisis is over. Ms. D'Amore said they have been working with Ms. Woods Matthews on updating the website. She will discuss sending a communication to the residents from the Mayor's office with Ms. Woods Matthews.

Mr. Burnett asked Ms. Fernandez if when they were listing entities for the Equity and Justice for All Commission if they mentioned the Common Council. Ms. Fernandez said they thought about the Common Council but did not chose them because they do not serve on other commissions. Mr. Burnett said that did not mean they could not serve on this Commission. He suggested considering the Common Council as opposed to the Board of Estimate and Taxation or adding the Common Council to the list.

Mr. Burnett said he took the Spanish language class and enjoyed it. He said it was supportive and collaborative and congratulated Ms. Fernandez on a great effort.

Mr. Heuvelman discussed next steps for the Commission and said they will have more discussions.

Ms. Smyth said it was a good idea to have a member from both the Board of Estimate and Taxation and the Common Council on the Commission. She said people have been waiting a long time for this Commission. She said she was impressed by how engaged Ms. Fernandez is with the community and she trusts her instincts, but asked her to keep in mind Ms. Ayers comments about the frustration of the community.

Mr. Heuvelman asked how the commission will engage without a community member. Ms. Fernandez explained that she sees this as the Commission connecting with the community intentionally. This Commission needs to be intentional and specific. She said it is important to have a space where all can share. She said she wants to be intentional with the group.

Ms. Revolus suggested having a presentation that brings in the perspective of the constituent with those who go to help. She said they need to show the otherside of the coin. Ms. Fernandez said they are going to make sure they hear from other people. There is history here. She added that this information will be brought up when they look at Police procedures to make the changes necessary to align with the DEI mission.

In response to Ms. Ayers' question, Mr. Heuvelman said that what is now the Human Rights Commission has fallen to the wayside. With Ms. Fernandez' help, they are going to re-write the structure of the Commission. He said there are a number of steps in the process. Ms. Ayers said her confusion was that the previous Chair wrote a document that was supposed to be sent to the Ordinance Committee. She asked if the Committee could see that document. Mr. Heuvelman said he would be happy to share it with the Committee.

Ms. Ayers told Mr. Heuvelman that he is suggesting that another body work on the structure of the Commission who does not have the passion for it. Mr. Heuvelman said that what Ms. Fernandez is describing tonight is very different than what was written before. He said it was not a complete document. Ms. Ayers asked that the Committee have an opportunity to catch up.

Ms. Smyth said that when Ms. Johnson, the former Chair of this Committee talked about the document, the Committee Chairs were going to get together to discuss the document and that there would be a joint meeting between the Community Services Committee and the Ordinance Committee. Mr. Heuvelman said he did not look at the document, because nothing had been written. What Ms. Johnson wrote were literary musings. He said they are very much at the beginning of this. Ms. Ayers said they will have to wait to see what is presented at this point.

Mr. Heuvelman said he and Ms. Shanahan, Chair of the Ordinance Committee will start writing the Ordinance. He described the steps and added that he wants everyone to have input.

c. Presentations by AnaVivian Estrella, Human Services Director

Community Resource/ Family Navigation and data discussion

Ms. Estrella reported there was a merger between the Community Resource and the Family Navigator. She shared her screen and presented the signature look of the Community Resource Hub. She said the service is set up for people who do not know anything about the community services that are offered. The staff helps people understand the services and resources.

Ms. Estrella described the services and added that their staff is bilingual (Albanian, Haitian Creole, Italian and Spanish). They base their services on the needs of the individual.

The Navigation Hub shares an office with the Norwalk Public Schools at the Family Center once a week. She presented outreach efforts, such as printed materials, community meetings, presentations and events. The top areas of need are food, clothing, housing and employment. Ms. Estrella said they have an 87% success rate. She presented survey feedback results showing that 91% of the people felt more informed and 42% knew how to access resources and 93% felt confident they could connect to resources. Mr. Heuvelman said he was very excited by the success of the program. Ms. Smyth said Ms. Estrella was doing amazing work to benefit the residents. Ms. Estrella said it is a team. Mr. Burnett wanted to know the level of overlap that exists between the Family Center and the Navigation Hub. Ms. Estrella said she did not know if there was a lot of overlap. She said she understands that the Family Center deals with academic pieces.

Ms. Estrella said the Family Center has a pantry, but their job at the Navigation Hub is to shepherd those who need services to the right service provider. The Norwalk Public Schools works with a subset, but work with everyone. She added that she is not knowledgeable about what they do at the Family Center.

Community Impact Mini- Grant program

Ms. Estrella shared her screen and reviewed the key features including that the mini grant program is for smaller non profits where the awards are between \$5,000 and \$10,000. The total allocation will be \$100,000 and will be project based. She reviewed the scoring process and the application process that will focus on Health, Education or Safety Net. The application process will launch next week.

5. ACTION ITEMS

Health Department

**** MR. BURNETT MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE A GROUP PURCHASING PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT TOGETHER WITH ANY AND ALL OTHER AGREEMENTS, DOCUMENTS, INSTRUMENTS, OR AMENDMENTS REQUIRED THEREUNDER WITH VEIRA MEDICAL GROUP FOR PURPOSES OF COST SAVINGS IN MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT.**

Ms. D'Amore reviewed the item.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL AGREEMENTS, DOCUMENTS, INSTRUMENTS, OR AMENDMENTS AS MAY BE NECESSARY WITH HEALTH INFORMATION ALLIANCE, INC. (“CONNIE”) TO CONNECT TO AND JOIN CONNECTICUT’S STATEWIDE HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE (HIE).**

Ms. D’Amore reviewed the item.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO APPLY FOR AND ACCEPT IMMUNIZATION AND VACCINES FOR CHILDREN COVID-19 SUPPLEMENTAL GRANT FUNDS FROM THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN THE AMOUNT OF \$295,708 FOR THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 1, 2023 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025.**

AND TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, EXECUTE ANY AND ALL AGREEMENTS, DOCUMENTS, INSTRUMENTS, OR AMENDMENTS AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THE IMMUNIZATION AND VACCINES FOR CHILDREN COVID-19 SUPPLEMENTAL GRANT FUNDED ACTIVITIES FROM THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN THE AMOUNT OF \$295,708 FOR THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 1, 2023 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025.

Ms. D’Amore reviewed the item.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MS. REVOLUS)**

6. ADJOURN

**** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi

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Telesco Secretarial Services

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2023.