

Minutes for the March 9, 2023 meeting of the Youth Advisory Council

In attendance were (in alphabetical order): Dr. Malcolm Astley; Wayland Police School Resource Officer Shane Bowles; Wayland Police Dept. Sgt. Tyler Castagno; YAC Chairperson Lisa Raftery; and Director of Youth & Family Services, Mr. Jason Verhoosky. Minutes were taken by Mr. Peter Bochner. The meeting was held in person at the Town Safety Building.

Absent were: Ms. Pamela Cerne, Ms. Allison Kates, Rabbi Louis Polisson, Ms. Brenda Ross

The meeting was called to order at 5:11 p.m. by Chair Lisa Raftery. The minutes from the February meeting could not be approved because there was not a quorum of YAC members. Chair Raftery commented that she had heard from Wayland Town Nurse Michele Schuckel, who had only recently become aware of the existence of the minutes, and that “she really appreciated receiving the detailed minutes.”

Asked if Ms. Schuckel could attend a YAC meeting, Mr. Verhoosky clarified that anybody is welcome to come to a YAC meeting at any time.

It was stated by Chair Raftery that the April meeting would be virtual, and the May meeting will be in person at the Public Safety Building.

Dr. Astley asked if there was a mix-up between the Lean On Me form and the Wayland high school website.

Mr. Verhoosky said, “There had been a further conversation between WaylandCares and Molly [Pistrang-Gomes], our coordinator at REACH, to address some of the concerns. We are looking at a list of indicators and warning signs. I would not say that the Lean On Me tool is fleshed out; it cannot be implemented at this point in time. However, it contains an incredible list of resources, and we are working with the Wellness department on MVP and RAD, and some of the other key components.

“From the school side, the forms that are in place include the anonymous reporting form. We want to add a secondary part that asks if this relates to you or a friend. They could then select which option is appropriate.

“But before that happens, I had a meeting with Molly yesterday, to find out where they’re at with resources. We are working to create more transparency after the report is submitted.

“The focus group is asking if the document is effective, and is it something people will read?

“One document that the Violence Prevention task force is trying to come out with is an age-appropriate version for the middle school and the high school, one that explains what

happens related to Title 9 and what that looks like? While they are hearing 'Some things are out of your control, 'they need to be in control in terms of how much they want to share and what they are setting in motion. They may want to see if they can find resources without officially recording the form, or it can be officially recorded.

"They can also find private assistance. The form has gone through multiple rounds of edits with the Violence Prevention task force, so that it just becomes more like the fabric of everyone's life. We have gone through deciding the color font, how much language will be on the form, and whether it will be in the form of a poster or a flyer, or a link tree?

"We are integrating the Lean On Me tool in some capacity. But we are trying to figure out what we can and can't do, based on what is evidence-based. Will it be an education resource added to the to anonymous form?

"The last thing we discussed is the SBIRT tool that addresses subjects such as risky behaviors, violence in the home. We are taking it in same format the SBIRT tool took, which uses the Crafft tool, which involves multiple steps. We are determining how to address everyone's needs, and how to make everyone comfortable.

"With an evidence-based tool, everyone gets to ask the same questions, such as what substances have you used? Have you ridden in a car driven by someone under the influence?

"So when we review the answers to Part A to see if they have used a substance, that signals us to continue the process. But if they say, 'I had half a glass of wine, 'that's not an issue. If they say they drank a lot, that triggers another set of questions. The number of questions is small; there is some testing of the tool to identify three to four questions that are most likely to result in continuing the conversation. Then at that point in time, everyone answers those three to four questions, and then we ask another set of questions.

"If we reach the point where we need intervention, then an administrator, a therapist or a guidance counselor is going to triage that. They will contact your parents, would need the tool established, would need approval from the state because of their province in SBIRT.

"With SBIRT, we are not looking to get anyone in trouble, but merely recommend healthy behavior. But we will insert an intervention if someone is at risk of harm.

"SBIRT is given to 8th and 10th graders. We are supposed to be doing SBIRT this Monday and Tuesday by moving to the end of the month. The 8th grade SBIRT will be March 27 and 28. It will be administered by myself, Kelsey [Sanclemente, Youth and Family Services director], the guidance team, the nursing team and some administrators.

"The reason we give it to 8th and 10th graders is because those grades were picked because the MetroWest health survey determined the 8th to 9th grade and the 10th to 11th grade jumps are the biggest in terms of "that moment of independence," particularly 10th to 11th because that's when they start driving.

“For the 8th grade, the questions are done conversationally. It goes something like “Hi, here’s who I am. This is completely confidential. Can I ask you five questions? In the last 365 days, how often have you used tobacco? Alcohol? Vape? Cannabis? Then I say, ‘Here’s why we’re concerned, ’and we show them the brain development chart.”

“For the 10th grade, we shorten the time frame to the last two months, involving party situations. If they answer yes, then we ask, “What are you vaping? Where did you get it?”

“Once we have established a series of continuing actions, then we say, “Based on what you said, I’m concerned about your safety. We are not going to take legal action, you’re not in trouble, but we want to prevent you from going on the path to trouble.”

“To be honest, at the high school level, we thought it might not be useful, but the amount of openness was pretty surprising.”

Sgt. Castagno asked, “Do you suspect some kids who aren’t being honest?”

Mr. Verhoosky replied, “Well, we have worked with kids who are in or have been in diversion programs and they come in and say, ‘No, I’m not using.’ ”

Chair Raftery said, “You hope these kids can trust people.”

Youth Officer Bowles referenced an honest conversation he had had with his daughter about vaping.

Chair Raftery referenced a girl who had smoked marijuana only once, and never recovered psychologically. “And this was before marijuana was as potent as it is today.” She also said that a mother had spoken to her about her two kids who used Skoal [chewing tobacco] and both developed mouth cancer.

Sgt. Castagno said, “We [the Wayland Police Department] are trying to empower the kids to make their own decisions.”

Dr. Astley said, “My main interest is in keeping [the project] moving, carefully, with as much validity as the survey has, to have it reviewed by as many professionals. But not to just let it die. But now we’re up to four documents.”

He likened the four documents to four spokes on a wheel.

- The first spoke is the form on the high school website, which has no data.
- The second spoke is the referral form that can be used for manifesting concern about someone else. That is part of the healthy relationship training program. That’s a different focus.

- The third spoke, which is very different from spokes 1 and 2, is the violence prevention personal complaint form, and letting people know what's going to happen if they file it.
- The fourth spoke is SBIRT. This process of interviewing students is for professionals only, and requires a certain amount of training.

He said, "Each spoke has legitimacy, and I don't want to kill any of them with details." He added, "I've been circulating the Lean On Me form, and people are very enthusiastic. They're not saying, 'We're using it,' but they are looking at using it."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "It is more of a comprehensive approach, if we can bring it to guidance, if we can get a portion of it, maybe selling three or four indicators into SBIRT, then there's a recording element."

Dr. Astley said, "This is an academic and scientific process. If we accept being part of a pilot program, then there are mechanisms for follow-up. My only hesitation is what an effort this is."

Sgt. Castagno commented, "The Wayland police department lost eight employees in 2022. As of today, we are still down four."

Youth Officer Bowles suggested trying the form as a pilot effort. That way, "we can bring it to our classes [in the Wayland schools] without having someone approve it. This can be the smaller version. We can do that without causing turmoil."

Chair Raftery suggested looking at how bringing in components could enhance the project. She said, "We could take a document with more detail and incorporate that into Wellness, RAD, MVP. One question is, with the teenage brain, if there are too many details, do they get overloaded? We should use the document as a tool to enhance processes in place. The anonymous recording form is being distributed."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "My goal is to make this happen. I'm not trying to put up roadblocks. But the overall project needs to be broken down into bite-size components vs. giving them everything all at once. That's where I'm coming from."

"In talking with Molly [of REACH], one of our goals is to get the staff training of being more aware of indicators, and how to be a comprehensive trusted adult. We're adding so much more to their plate. If we don't do that we are going to lose the momentum we have."

Chair Raftery suggested doing a press release for parents "to take the burden off the teachers." The release would tell the parents that "these are tools we use in schools for honest reporting."

Mr. Verhoosky said, “The way it’s viewed, by parents, staff and law enforcement, is as just one spoke in the wheel.”

Dr. Astley said, “It’s very positive and exciting when it’s thought of as building a comprehensive effort. It’s okay to modify it, to slow the pacing of implementation. But don’t stop altogether. The goal is to support everybody and prevent harm. Let us know how we can help. What are the next steps? Where do you need support?”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “As far as next steps go, we are looking at working with administration and guidance, to establish if we can add anything to SBIRT. I know Betsy [Gavron, WMS principal] is taking a year sabbatical. In addition, Marybeth [Sacramone, counseling department coordinator at WHS], who is our leader regarding SBIRT guidance and counseling, is retiring.

Chair Raftery said, “There is a lot on your plate. Let’s see what we can accomplish by the end of the school year. We will continue on this.”

Dr. Astley announced that on Monday, March 20, there will be a White Ribbon event at the Sudbury Library.

Next, Mr. Verhoosky provided a clinical update. He said, “Not a whole lot has changed. Youth & Family Services maintains a full calendar, but has open spots to see new cases. The position of clinician has been posted. We have received one letter and that resume looks promising. I am looking to set up an interview. It will be a full-time, 35-hour position. We would love to have someone to interface with the police department, but that role would be for another person.”

Sgt. Castagno said, “Wayland is the only town [in the area] without a clinician that works with the police.”

Mr. Verhoosky said that the WaylandCares February meeting did not take place, but “we will be back on March 21. For the spring, we are working on alcohol awareness and social host liability, and are also looking to do a spring opioid campaign, trying to modify a national campaign that had the slogan ‘One Pill Can Kill.’ A lot of fentanyl overdoses occur with Ecstasy or DMA pills laced with fentanyl.”

Chair Raftery said she knew of a girl who had taken some [of the drug known as] Molly and died. She asked Mr. Verhoosky if, in his search for speakers, someone ever comes up to him and says, “This happened to me.”

In terms of speakers, Youth Officer Bowles said that his daughter loved hearing Chris Herren. *(Note: Former NBA player Herren had been scheduled to address WHS students this spring, but the event has been pushed back to the fall.)*

Mr. Verhoosky said, “Herren is very passionate in how he presents. But his presentation has been pushed back to the fall. He has an incredible team for resources. The support structure around him is really good.

“Another speaker is Dr. Ruth Potee. She takes a scientific approach, with a focus on brain science. Although it’s a bit dry, it contains really good information, based on real-life stories.”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “We are planning a night in April for a Spring Youth Night. It will be a Friday, either the 7th or the 28th.”

Chair Raftery asked, “Would it make sense to peel off the 6th and 7th graders from the 8th graders?”

Mr. Verhoosky said that everyone tends to find their own area.

Sgt. Castagno suggested, “We could do a 5:30 to 7:15 and then a later time for different age groups.”

The next topic on the agenda was opioid settlement planning. Mr. Verhoosky said, “I attended a webinar on Tuesday (March 7). The town of Wayland has received a good chunk of money, so right now there are two dates. Every town has signed onto a class action lawsuit against Johnson & Johnson and a host of other pharma companies, prescribing practices led to a massive amount of addiction, because they sold it as ‘no one should feel pain.’ The basis of the lawsuit includes shipping practices pertaining to the distribution of questionable prescriptions.”

Mr. Verhoosky said the first two payments are \$15,683 and \$16,482. The largest payment is [approximately] \$62,000, but that is spread out over 30 years, an option to giving communities 10 years of payments.

He said, “The challenge is it goes to the general fund. It doesn’t go there for general financial purposes, but instead to harm reduction, direct intervention and community education.” He said he had a meeting the following week, to discuss how some of the money should have been rectified. In other words, “We have this money, we need to allocate it. But that being said, in the future, any monies that come in, will have to go to a town meeting or article.”

He said, “The challenge is, if I get up at Town Meeting, and say here’s what we’re doing, people will be commenting and arguing.”

He said he is looking to start a community action team, with Sherre Greenbaum, involving WaylandCares. “We are looking to provide an inventory of all the available resources, looking to make fentanyl test strips and Narcan more publicly available, including in homes and lending libraries, the public health department, even Youth &

Family Services, 'if we ever get a home again. 'He said that Narcan has no negative effects."

Chair Raftery asked if Narcan has an expiration. Sgt. Castagno replied, "Two years."

Asked if there a need for Narcan in Wayland, Mr. Verhoosky said, "There is a need for it everywhere."

Sgt. Castagno said, "It can be used not just for Wayland citizens, but for visitors."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "Or Wayland residents could be going elsewhere to use drugs. Or others could be coming here."

Getting back to the opioid funding, Mr. Verhoosky said, "There are oodles of restrictions. We have the money and we can't use it. We are looking to use funds to create new resources."

Asked about the town using the funds to hire a social worker, Mr. Verhoosky said it could be used for a pilot program to add some first responders. The program would be something "we could fund for a year or two, then the town would have to pick it up, and absorb the cost into the town budget."

Chair Raftery said there is a YAC page on the town website. She said that the YAC appointments of Brenda [Ross] and Pam [Cerne] end in June, as does hers, as does Malcolm's. She noted, "Not a lot of people know what we do."

Sgt. Castagno asked Mr. Verhoosky if he could post the YAC vacancies on the portal.

Mr. Verhoosky said, "I'm not the person who does it." Chair Raftery said, "I will follow up on the vacancies."

Chair Raftery made a motion to conclude the meeting. Sgt. Castagno seconded the motion. Dr. Astley voted to conclude the meeting by saying, "aye." Sgt. Castagno and Chair Raftery did the same. The meeting concluded at 6:21 p.m.