

Minutes of the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) meeting
Meeting date: Feb 9, 2018 at 9:00 a.m.

YAC members present: Dr. Malcolm Astley, Youth Officer Shane Bowles, Detective Tyler Castagno, Reverend Theodore F. Crass, Ms. Sarah Greenaway, Ms. Jane Purser, Ms. Lisa Raftery, Ms. Brenda Ross, Mr. Jason Verhoosky.

Ms. Sarah Greenaway called the meeting to order at 9:05.

The rewritten minutes from the 12/1 meeting were reviewed. At 9:10 the rewritten minutes were tentatively accepted, pending a vote when there was a quorum present.

Ms. Greenway said the meeting would start with an overview of the new version of the MetroWest Adolescent Youth Health Survey.

Mr. Jason Verhoosky began the overview by providing some background on the report, which is the result of a partnership among the YAC, the MetroWest Health Foundation, which funds the survey, and Education Development Center Inc. (EDC). A new version of the survey appears every two years, and the latest one represents the sixth cycle of the survey. The questionnaire for this survey was administered in the fall of 2016, and the next survey will be administered in the fall of 2018, with data expected to be available in April 2019.

The full survey results can be found on the WaylandCares, Wayland High School (WHS) and Wayland Middle School (WMS) websites. However, Ms. Jane Purser said that many parents don't know about the survey, and tend to ignore the letter they receive in the mail alerting them to it. Mr. Verhoosky said that many students forget taking it, and when they are reminded of taking it, they recall being asked the same question eight different ways. The reason for that is because if all the answers don't align, the data gets tossed. As a result, the survey has +/- 3% accuracy.

The 2016 survey was given to a total of 16,387 middle school students and 24,385 high school students in the MetroWest area, and 595 WMS students and 773 WHS students. In the most recent survey, 107 questions were given to WMS students and 60 were asked of WHS students. The subjects include substance use, violence and bullying, behaviors related to unintentional injuries, sexual behavior, mental health, physical activity and dietary factors, protective factors, and risk behaviors on school property. The topics and questions are drawn from input from WaylandCares and Wayland Youth and Family Services.

The questions are geared to lifetime use (i.e., have you ever ingested X?) and current use (i.e., have you used X in the last 30 days?). Overall, Mr. Verhoosky said that the results showed that WMS students tend to make healthy decisions. However, there is a sharp rise in risky behavior between middle school and high school.

He said the numbers for Wayland shown by the survey are in line with other communities; in fact, Wayland has some of the best numbers in the region, even some of the best in the state. However, one concern is related to the spike in substance abuse numbers that occur for 10th and 11th grade students -- the time when adolescents gain independence and often a vehicle. For instance, when asked if they had had a drink in the last 30 days, 9% of ninth graders, 27% of 10th graders, 39% of 11th graders and 46% for 12th graders said they had. While these figures are at or below regional, state and national averages, the YAC would like them to be lower. The YAC is currently focused on eliminating the risks of drinking and driving (i.e., students having a system

in place for a designated driver) and binge drinking, which is defined as four or more drinks for females, five or more drinks for males.

Mr. Verhoosky and Ms. Rachel Hanks, a wellness teacher at WHS, gave a presentation to raise awareness of issues related to drinking to WHS juniors and seniors during the week of February 5. Knowing that a WHS student binge drinking is on a mission to get as much liquor in them as quickly as possible, the presentation was partly designed to help the students understand what constitutes a drink. They had several students pour a “mock drink,” and pointed out that one overpoured drink, consisting of multiple shots of alcohol, can be the equivalent of three, four or even five. They also told the students that participating in a drinking game often makes a person relinquish control of how much they imbibe.

Ms. Jane Purser noted that the presentation also explained that males and females tend to “hold their liquor” differently, and that one’s ability to hold their liquor is a factor of their physical size, i.e., body weight. The presentation also explained the rate at which alcohol is metabolized by the body.

At this point the discussion turned to a recent New Year’s Eve party in Wayland. A girl from out-of-state came up to visit a friend, and, after reportedly playing beer pong but substituting vodka for beer, the girl passed out. After trying to revive her, the kids at the party called the police, and Det. Tyler Castagno answered the call. The girl went to the emergency room with alcohol poisoning.

Det. Shane Bowles said that binge drinking was more common among the town’s 10th and 11th graders than the seniors. Reverend Ted Crass noted that binge drinking is less common in Europe, perhaps because alcohol is more part of the culture.

Det. Castagno said he thought the high school presentation on drinking had taken the right approach, neither too strong, nor too wishy-washy. It did not use scare tactics and included some humor (Ms. Purser noted that the presentation opened with a clip from the movie *Old School* that had the students laughing.)

Ms. Lisa Raftery also said it was better that the WHS students understand what goes into a drink before they go away to college.

Marijuana

When WHS students were asked if they had used marijuana in the past 30 days, those answering in the affirmative included 2% of ninth graders, 8% of 10th graders, 21% of 11th graders and 27% of 12th graders. When the question changed to lifetime use, i.e., had they ever used marijuana, the percentages were 5%, 13%, 38% and 44%, respectively. Asked if it was easy for them to obtain marijuana, 64% of 10th graders, 71% of 11th graders and 84% of 12th graders said it was. Mr. Verhoosky said that, for parents wondering how it is so available, the simple answer is that there is plenty of availability. Like alcohol, which an underage person can get from their home, or through being purchased by an elder sibling or friend, there is no lack of supply, and it is not hard to find once you know where to look.

When WHS students were asked if they had even ridden in a car with a driver who had been using marijuana, 3% of ninth graders, 7% of 10th graders, 18% of 11th graders and 22% of 12th graders said they had. Mr. Verhoosky said that kids seem to feel that it’s safer to drive while stoned than drunk. This may be partly due to the fact that kids know that, when driving, the police

have zero tolerance for alcohol, but with marijuana, the kids seem to think, “Who knows? If I get stopped, maybe I will get in trouble, but maybe I won’t.”

At this point, Det. Castagno and Youth Officer Bowles were asked about a policeman’s ability to test for driving under the influence of marijuana. Det. Castagno said there were tests, as with alcohol, but it is harder to prove that someone is under the influence of marijuana. He said that there was an eye test, that when someone is stoned, their eyes tend to “dive.” He also mentioned a saliva drug test, but this test can only conclude that THC is in the accused’s system, not how much THC is present.

Stress

The council next looked at a slide about mental health. At the WMS level, 20% of female students reported high levels of stress in the last 30 days, compared to 10% of males. At the WHS, high levels of stress were reported by 50% of females and 26% of males. Mr. Verhoosky said that at the middle school, stress is related to what the student would be doing after school, but in high school, the stress factors change to first and foremost school/achievement issues, then family issues, then physical and emotional health. Mr. Verhoosky said that the issue of sleep was also addressed in the survey.

Connectivity

On the subject of connectivity, 85% of WMS students were happy to be at their school and 92% of them felt safe there. (Note: The meeting took place the week prior to the Parkland, Fla., mass shooting.) At the high school level, 81% of those surveyed said they felt close to people, 84% were happy to be at school, and 92% felt safe there. Mr. Verhoosky said that while these numbers are good, you could flip the numbers to say that one in 10 students do not feel safe at school. He said that WHS, like several other schools in the area, has implemented SBIRT, a universal screening tool. The tool can help those administering it catch someone who needs help but for the most part it reinforces the behavior of the kids who are doing well. SBIRT also represents another opportunity for a trusted adult to tell the kids, “We’re here, we have an eye out.”

Dr. Malcolm Astley also “flipped” the survey numbers that 74% of females and 80% of males reported feeling part of the high school community, to say that meant that one in four WHS students do not feel connected at the high school level. He said that the Wayland community needs to be proactive in terms of spotting the signs of disconnectivity, which he said is one of the underlying factors that can feed many other risky behaviors.

Mr. Verhoosky said that WHS takes the matter of disconnectivity seriously. He said that the school had conducted focus groups with students discussing why they feel disconnected, as well as advisory sessions that focused on what students were feeling, what resources were available to them and the concept of trusted adults -- that if they had someone to turn to, they might not feel disconnected. He said that it is a top priority in terms of the curriculum, but was unaware if anything had actually been implemented yet. He said that Dr. Dossie Kahn of the Wayland Youth and Family Services and WHS Transitions/Adjustment Counselor Mr. James Chiarelli could address this question.

Dr. Astley said that focus groups and advisory sessions are good, as is talking to the kids, but the school needs a clear plan to find those who feel disconnected, because this might allow us to make headway on other issues, such as violence and bullying. If there is no clear plan, he would urge one person to take charge. He asked Mr. Verhoosky if the survey could show what other

factors correlate with students who feel disconnected. Mr. Verhoosky replied that the survey does not allow the data to be broken down by student. “If a student says they are using alcohol, we can’t identify the particular student, or correlate to see if that student is using other substances. If we know that 27% identified as binge drinkers, and 14% feel disconnected, we don’t have access to that level of data to say if someone belongs to both groups. The survey does not allow you to make the assumption that because A is happening, that B is too.”

Dr. Astley said he would advise that the YAC look for the possibility of community links on the topic of connectivity, to say what it means, as a first step. He suggested revisiting this point at a future meeting.

Reverend Ted Crass asked if the survey looked at the implications of technology, particularly social media, on kids. He pointed out that many of the software engineers who develop social media technology don’t allow their own kids to use it. Mr. Verhoosky answered that there is some data on technology and social media. However, 75% of female parents and 82% of male parents never monitor their kids’ use of technology.

Ms. Purser recalled that at a recent discussion of Internet safety at the elementary school, many of the parents of fourth and fifth graders said they thought they were closely monitoring their kids’ cell phone and computer use, only to learn that they really didn’t know what their kids were doing. They reported being amazed to learn their kids were talking to strangers.

Ms. Greenaway said she thought that, on the whole, Wayland’s youth was behaving pretty well with social media. It could be better, she said, but considering the freedom they have, they are keeping themselves in check.

Ms. Purser mentioned that at a recent meeting of the Wait Til 8 movement, which recommends not giving a child a cell phone before eighth grade, the 50 attendees had come to the meet thinking “no way is this doable,” but by the end of the meeting, they were enthusiastic about the idea.

Ms. Greenaway recommended a book titled Excellent Sheep, written by Yale professor William Deresiewicz, that describes how fundamentally broken Ivy League education is and why it makes students feel depressed and lost.

Back to marijuana

Mr. Verhoosky had attended the previous day’s state hearing with the Cannabis Control Commission. He said the CCC has solidified its draft regulations and would make its final modifications once the user comment sessions wrapped up the following week. The CCC will release its final regulations on March 15.

One of the CCC’s concerns is the difference between medicinal and recreational marijuana, and what the dispensaries that sell both will look like. Some patients’ rights advocates feel there should be a partition or some type of physical build-out between the medical and recreational marijuana sections, so that medical marijuana patients don’t feel like they are at a liquor store.

Mr. Verhoosky said that there are different types of licenses. There are grow and cultivation licenses, there are licenses for cultivation for data science and experimental purposes, there is licensing of retail establishments. He also said there is a tier system based on whether you qualify as an industrial grower or craft grower, based on how much space you need for cultivation. He

said that at the meeting many people were inquiring about delivery licenses, which are not currently illegal per se, even though beer, wine and liquor delivery is not allowed in Massachusetts. Other issues the CCC is still debating pertain to whether marijuana cafés will be legal; whether event planners will be able to obtain special 1- or 3-day licenses, as they can for alcohol; and whether caterers will be able to offer marijuana or marijuana dishes. He said there were also a fair numbers of doctors at the meeting speaking not about the dangers of marijuana, but the potential for medical research.

He mentioned that the city of Gloucester has embraced legalization and has organized a marijuana task force, consisting of police and medical personnel. The city already has one medical dispensary and says that will have one recreational dispensary, which would be located in an area that's convenient but not on Main St. downtown, and not near schools. Their attitude is, if we're going to do this, let's educate people, let's regulate it, let's tax it, let's get some revenue.

He explained that with marijuana, there is a tax at every point of the process, at the point of cultivation, at the point when it is brought to distribution and at the point of purchase. There is a 20% tax but it is paid over and over again. So there may be more tax revenue than originally thought, but industry representatives are now saying the tax plan is not fair. Representatives from the distilled spirits industry might disagree, since 37% of the cost of every type of spirit is a tax.

Wayland

The general assumption is that, according to those heading up the various departments in the town of Wayland, it makes the most sense to move forward to propose an opt-out for the September 4 town meeting. By process, an opt-out won't be discussed on the town meeting floor the way the moratorium was. The main issue of an opt-out is getting the ballot initiative passed; the town meeting is just to rectify the vote. Once we receive a final recommendation, we can decide what message we want to send out, then open the process to public comment, get feedback from the departments of public health and town counsel, and submit it to town clerk Beth Klein for her okay. There are now guidance regulations as to what such language needs to be, so at that point we will create the language with the town, i.e., the planning board and the board of selectmen.

Reverend Crass said that no signature campaign is necessary because we are not altering the state constitution or town bylaws. The opt-out is just a modification of existing law.

Mr. Verhoosky said that we (meaning the YAC?) were the most logical board to determining the zoning bylaws that would govern where recreational retail establishments will be located. But at the moment there is no need to determine these bylaws, since no one is knocking down the door to apply for retailing licenses. So for the moment, our goals are to build educational resources and to build concern.

It was noted that some members of the local community are anxious to know why nothing has happened yet at the town level. However, the YAC needs to wait for the CCC to release its final regulations on March 15 before it can start to release information.

At this point, with a quorum present, the vote was taken to accept the rewritten minutes from the 12/1 meeting. The minutes were accepted. The meeting was adjourned at 10:38.