

Meeting of the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC), Friday, May 3, 2019

In attendance were (in alphabetical order): Dr. Malcolm Astley, Ms. Pamela Cerne, Ms. Corrie Dretler, Ms. Sarah Greenaway, Dr. Dossie Kahn, Rabbi Louis Polisson, Ms. Lisa Raftery, Ms. Brenda Ross, and Mr. Jason Verhoosky.

The meeting was called to order at 9:16 a.m.

### **Coming and goings**

Mr. Verhoosky noted that Rev. Ted Crass is leaving the YAC, although he plans on attending the June YAC meeting. Ms. Corrie Dretler is also leaving, and it is hoped that Ms. Pam Cerne will take on her role as an appointee of the School Committee. Mr. Verhoosky noted that the official swearing-in process for a YAC member entails going to the particular board that is appointing the member and getting on its agenda in order to be officially appointed. Once the appointee is part of the minutes, that person will need to fill out a form letter, go to the Town Clerk office and get sworn in. Mr. Verhoosky encouraged all YAC appointees to provide an update to the board that appointed them, once or twice a year, in order to ensure two-way communication, i.e., bringing information from the respective boards to YAC meetings, and keeping the board informed on what is going on with Youth & Family Services/YAC. He noted that some boards, such as the school committee, have two appointees, while others have only one. Similarly, some appointees serve two-year terms, others only one year.

Mr. Verhoosky said he had received an official letter from the selectmen's office notifying him that the YAC advisory board is responsible for submitting an annual report. There is a clause in the town bylaws that says if YAC does not submit this information by the due date – the end of September -- town leadership will dissolve the YAC advisory board. He said he will send out the report in August for YAC members to approve.

### **Marijuana update**

Mr. Verhoosky provided an update on the town's marijuana policy. The vote in the April 23 election ratified the ban on recreational marijuana retail establishments, and the approval of the reworded zoning article at the April 30 Town Meeting clarified that the only type of marijuana-related business that can be situated in the zoning overlay area is a Registered Marijuana Dispensary (aka a Medical Marijuana Treatment Center). He said that none of the owners of the businesses in the overlay area report having been approached by anyone representing such dispensaries.

### **SADD event**

Mr. Verhoosky noted that SADD's spring festival has changed in scope and date. The group is now partnering with Wayland Wednesdays group at Town Center, and there are two possible Wednesdays, June 19 and August 28, for the event. The event will be centered around making healthy decisions, and will offer games, music and refreshments.

There may also be chalk art on the sidewalks on the theme of empowerment. Mr. Verhoosky also noted that WaylandCares is looking at partnering with the “@theW” art gallery in the Town Center for a fall event.

Ms. Lisa Raftery suggested blocking off one of the two entrances to the Town Center for safety reasons.

### **Prom Night/Late Night**

Mr. Verhoosky reported that planning for the junior prom is going well, that the Late Night event now has proper insurance, and that all late night participants will receive WaylandCares luggage tags for the bags they bring to the event as well as flashlight mementos. He said that both he and Ms. Jane Purser will be at the late night event. Ms. Cerne said that Wayland High School Parent Organization (WHSPO) had taken over the Late Night event to resolve the insurance issue.

### **Grants**

Mr. Verhoosky noted that WaylandCares has several grant applications out to cover the disappearance of federal funds. One is a federal STOP Act grant (STOP is an acronym for Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking) for substance abuse and underage drinking. He said that although that grant only amounts to less than half (\$50,000 vs. \$125,000) of the current federal grant, it would cover Ms. Purser’s salary and much of the coalition’s programming. He said that WaylandCares has also applied for several local grants, including one that it is collaboratively applying for (with nine other youth communities) with the MetroWest Health Foundation. The grant would allow for a more unified message on prevention, and would enable WaylandCares to reach out to other communities that either lack funding or else are not doing much in the area of prevention. The group spearheading that effort is the MetroWest Substance Abuse Alliance, which convenes on a monthly basis. There is also a small chance that WaylandCares might partner with the MetroWest YMCA.

### **Youth & Family Services**

Mr. Verhoosky provided an update on Youth & Family Services. He said that Dr. Dossie Kahn and clinician Ms. Kelsey Sanclemente currently have a full case load and that all the Y&FS education and support groups are continuing: the monthly grandparents group, Snack and Relax, the Middle School boys group, the Middle School girls group and the High School dinner club group.

Ms. Sanclemente and Ms. Purser have taken over the Middle School Youth Leadership Group and recently completed an Earth Day cleanup.

Ms. Sarah Greenaway said that Ms. Purser is also involved in a project to embellish the decorate planter pots at the Middle School and described them as “gorgeous.”

Mr. Verhoosky said that Youth & Family Services had recently participated in the previous month's Wayland Citizens Academy, which was organized by the Board of Selectmen and allowed Wayland residents who signed up to learn what every town department does. He said that many people came up to him at the event, saying they had no idea that Youth & Family Services did 80% of what they do.

Ms. Lisa Raftery iterated her concern for the elementary school Metco students, who face a particularly hard time in learning to transition between home and Wayland. She said she thought they could use a chance to talk to someone.

### **WaylandCares and Empower**

Mr. Verhoosky said that WaylandCares is wrapping up its Empower campaign and is prepping for its two summer Empowerment sessions. The first runs the week of June 24-28, and the second the week of August 12-16. This year there is a new \$50 application fee (waivable for families who can't afford it), whose purpose is to ensure some accountability. Mr. Verhoosky said the first event has historically been well-attended, but by the time the second August session rolls around, some of the enrollees fail to show or else "drop out" after a day or two. The goal of the sessions, which are open to 7<sup>th</sup> graders to seniors and run 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., is to empower youth to take on leadership roles. Sessions involve teen problem solving or game playing. Each day has a different educational theme, such as how youths can implement change in MetroWest substance abuse, make themselves Above the Influence or play Jeopardy with themes based on the Wayland community.

Ms. Brenda Ross asked if there was more information on the WaylandCares website about the Empower sessions. Mr. Verhoosky said that the information is actually posted on the website of the town's Recreation department, because the sessions represent a partnership between the Recreation department and WaylandCares. However, he said that the information can be hard to find on the Recreation department's website because of the way the site is organized.

He noted that the program is primarily for Wayland residents, who are given first chance at registering, but if there were openings, students from other towns would be considered.

Dr. Dossie Kahn said that local businesses used to sponsor the sessions by providing lunches, but this resulted in several problems. First of all, there was a great deal of leftover food, which had to be given away. Secondly, some students expressed dissatisfaction with the food selection. Thirdly, a third person was needed to pick up the lunches. So last year, it was decided that the students should bring their own lunches from home, and it worked better. WaylandCares provides only snacks.

She added that for her, the best thing about the program is observing the mentoring that takes place between the older enrollees and the younger ones. She added that Ms. Sanclemente will definitely join in leading the June sessions, and possibly the August sessions as well.

## **Violence prevention**

Dr. Malcolm Astley said he was studying and evaluating the resources that the town has in place for violence prevention. He said there were some eight groups in town dealing with the issue of violence prevention, and he was evaluating what each group's focus and priorities are, how much time each group can devote to the issue, how much overlap there is among the groups and how much coordination there is. For instance, several groups focus on the warning signs of violence, and he said that compiling a single list of the various groups' warning signs was a logical first step. But, he asked, who should review this list? A second list could be the intervention steps that need to be taken with youths who are identified as displaying these warning signs? Again, the next question is, he said, who will follow through on intervention?

Another focus in violence prevention is on breakups, which are the most dangerous times in relationships. He wondered if the town is providing the appropriate (and not invasive) ways to maintain a focus on breakups. Yet another area of focus is monitoring for signs of isolation, an indicator of potential harm. He questioned whether we are sufficiently monitoring high school seniors who face the anxieties of "Senior Summer," the time when all their relationships and friendships come to an end, and they move away from firmly established routines. He wondered how best to teach coping skills to teenagers who feel shame, and its "close cousin" contempt, and how we can prevent kids from "falling in hate," which disrupts their capacity for rational thinking, and build resiliency and self-respect.

He said that court violence assessment teams have brought fatality rates way down, because they are authorized to hold a person they deem has high potential for violence until that potential drops. He said there is such a team in Wayland. He said this is where Campbell assessment from Johns Hopkins comes in.

He said that in Massachusetts there are on average 13 to 15 murders per year, largely of girls. Male on male violence considerably higher. Who is the group who can designate the time to review these overlapping matters?

Dr. Dossie Kahn said there is a counseling group in Wayland High School that includes herself, principal Allyson Mizoguchi and guidance department head Marybeth Sacramone. She said this team originally met monthly to identifying situations of substance abuse. However, she said the structure is no longer in place as a regular meeting, but more of an ongoing consultation with the high school guidance team, to check in and discuss what needs they see vis a vis the students and their needs.

Another resource is the school's Wellness committee, which includes director of student services Richard Whitehead, wellness director Scott Parsegian, wellness instructor Rachel Hanks, school nurse Amy Schoeff and a handful of parent reps. The committee meets four times a year.

Dr. Astley said that Lincoln-Sudbury and Wayland high schools have made major steps in tackling violence prevention, but not to the point where it's systemic.

Ms. Ross asked if these violence prevention programs had a specific LGBTQ focus, and wondered if such gender identification conversations were taking place.

Dr. Astley said it has happened in thoughtful but perhaps spotty ways. He gave the example of Lincoln-Sudbury high school students informing middle school students about which groups they could join at the high school level.

Dr. Kahn said that taking stances for LGBTQ needs and against racism is important in terms of combatting violence. She said that misogyny is the common thread across hatreds and that, as a community, it is important to teach respect in one unified way.

## **SBIRT**

Ms. Verhoosky said that the evidence-based practice of SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment) took place at the high school the week of April 8 and that everything went well, and that it continues to be a positive tool. Ms. Cerne noted, saying she had heard nothing from her own kids in high school, and "that was good."

Ms. Greenaway said that a 17-year-old boy from Lincoln had committed suicide several weeks earlier, and she said she took some small comfort in that it is being talked about.

## **MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey**

Mr. Verhoosky said that so far he had only seen a report on the key indicators from the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, but that he had a meeting scheduled for Monday night, May 6, to go over the full findings and data. He was going to meet with school principals and vice principals, and said he would be scheduling a night to release the data to the public. Of concern, he said, is the large spike in vaping, especially at the high school level. He said that while vaping at the middle school level is somewhat concerning – they went up, but not as much as he was anticipating), at the high school level the numbers have reached alarming levels. He also said that worries about mental health and stress continue to rise.

It was determined that, in lieu of a June meeting at Town Hall, Ms. Greenaway would host a gathering of the YAC members at her house on Tuesday, May 28.

Mr. Verhoosky said that now that the town budget was approved at Town Meeting, he can go before the personnel board and make a formal request to increase the hours of Ms. Sanclemente in her role of clinician with Youth & Family Services.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:36.