

Meeting of the Youth Advisory Council, Nov. 1, 2019

In attendance were (in alphabetical order) Dr. Malcolm Astley, Wayland Youth Officer Shane Bowles, Wayland Detective Tyler Castagno, Ms. Pamela Cerne, Dr. Dossie Kahn, Ms. Jane Purser, Ms. Lisa Raftery, Ms. Brenda Ross and Mr. Jason Verhoosky.

In the absence of Ms. Sara Greenaway, the proceedings were chaired by Dr. Malcolm Astley.

The meeting was called to order at 9:17. The minutes from the September meeting were approved. The October minutes were also approved with a few minor changes and rewordings.

Mr. Verhoosky began with an update on behalf of the Friends of Youth & Family Services. Sejal Srinivasan and Eliza Mosurick, two previous members of the group, are now chairing the group and have begun long-range planning, which includes recruiting new members and refocusing on fundraising efforts. The plan is to have two meetings per year to discuss fundraising, prevention efforts and community education efforts, as well as to discuss what kind of programming would be most valuable to fund and put on. The group will be more structured than it was previously, when fundraising wasn't its main focus, and there will be an outline structure for fundraising and outreach efforts. But now that the grant funding WaylandCares' programs has come to an end, the Friends are going to focus on soliciting donations to the 501(c)(3) that supports WaylandCares. To do so, it is proposing sponsorship levels, with beginning levels of Donor (any amount under \$50) and Friend (\$50) and an upper level of \$5,000 (corporate sponsorship or individual). The goal set by the Friends is to replace the \$22,400 that had been covered by the grant that has gone away.

Mr. Verhoosky next provided an update on the statewide ban on vaping. As of the day of the meeting (November 1), the ban still stands in our state. He said that WaylandCares tacked on a discussion on vaping education to the recent Wayland Middle School and Wayland High School educational workshops that discussed the findings of the 2018 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey. Those taking part in the meetings included director of student services Richard Whitehead; wellness director Scott Parseghian; WaylandCares program coordinator and Middle School envoy Jane Purser; and SADD director John Berry. The student members of SADD reflected on vaping and how it was impacting them. Mr. Verhoosky said the two meetings attracted some 40 to 45 attendees total.

During the vaping part of the presentation, the attendees heard about what vaping is, how it works, the ban update, the number of lawsuits at both the state and federal levels trying to overturn the ban, the burden of proof that is now on Gov. Baker's administration, and what the protocol is for labeling something a public health emergency.

Mr. Verhoosky said that new articles pertaining to vaping are coming out every day, discussing issues such as the contaminants found in Juul pods (either because they were

expired or were part of the manufacturing process) and whether Juul knew about these problems. He said the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is still in the process of identifying the root cause of the vaping afflictions, but it seems to be accepted that the majority of illnesses stem from illicitly purchased THC products, although pulmonary illnesses are being caused even by “legitimate” vaping products.

In response to a question, he said that the age at which one can legally vape varies by state. In Massachusetts, there is no statewide policy; the age is determined by the individual community. However, nearly every town in the state has an age 21 limit.

Dr. Dossie Kahn mentioned that upcoming proposed ban of all flavored tobacco, including menthol. Mr. Verhoosky explained the “philosophy” behind mentholated cigarettes: that smoking a menthol cigarette further opens up your pores, allowing the smoker to absorb nicotine at higher and more effective rates.

Ms. Jane Purser suggested that the numbers of illnesses caused by vaping THC may be underestimated, because in states where marijuana is still illegal, someone taken to the emergency room may be reluctant to say they were vaping THC.

Mr. Verhoosky noted that CDC officials won’t have any definitive answers to the question of what is causing vaping-related illnesses by Jan. 25, when the ban in Massachusetts ends. Mr. Verhoosky noted that in the case of tainted lettuce, the CDC can track the product’s distribution and shipment and determine which farm in which state it came from. With vape products, no such tracking is possible.

There was a discussion of the dangers of Thanksgiving weekend, when the college students return home and drink with their friends. Ms. Purser quoted one of the findings from the MetroWest survey, that 36% of students report they access alcohol from home, with their parents’ acquiescence.

As another example of the dangers of drinking, the yearly Halloween party in Marlboro that was to take place the following night (Saturday, Nov. 2) was mentioned. Dr. Kahn said that every year there are serious alcohol-related problems at this party, such as alcohol poisoning requiring emergency transport to an ER. Ms. Purser said the problem is often not what takes place *at* the party, because the hosts are careful to not serve minors and to try to not let anyone sneak alcohol in. The problems often stem from hard pregameing (drinking before the party) and the afterparties.

Dr. Astley suggested that the topic of parties should be a separate agenda item. It was suggested that YAC check to see if it could recommend party-related stats to be included in the High School and Middle School monthly newsletters.

Mr. Verhoosky reported that he had had a preliminary budget meeting on Monday, Oct. 28 with Wayland Town Administrator Louise Miller, head of the finance committee Brian Keveny, and the Board of Selectmen, regarding bringing Y&FS clinician Ms. Kelsey Sanclemente on-board full-time as well as integrating Ms. Purser’s salary with

WaylandCares into the town budget. He said that there were no major questions or concerns with either action. He said he would go back before the personnel board on November 12 at 8:45 a.m., at which time they will review our proposals and ask preliminary questions, although he said he thought it unlikely that they would take a vote at that time. He said the more likely scenario was that he would have to go back and answer more questions.

Regarding the MetroWest Substance Abuse Prevention Alliance, a grant was used to bring in a consultant to create a screening tool that assesses the knowledge and expertise of individuals and communities about prevention. Mr. Verhoosky said he would send the tool, which is available on Survey Monkey, out to YAC members, then WaylandCares members, then anyone in the Wayland community. Ms. Purser said the goal is to engage all of the 25 communities that are members of the alliance.

It was suggested that although the tool is currently focused on substance prevention, it could be modified for other problems, such as domestic violence.

Mr. Verhoosky said that the next step was to nail down a time for a meeting of the violence prevention subcommittee, with the goal of actually meeting by the end of November. Dr. Astley suggested that due to the problem of finding a time that was good for everyone, that it might be worth exploring setting up a phone link that subcommittee members could call into, in order to facilitate things.

At this point, Dr. Astley asked to yield his chairing of the meeting to Ms. Brenda Ross, so that he could speak freely on the matter of violence prevention. He mentioned the Campbell Danger Assessment, a tool developed to help court teams assess potential perpetrators brought in on domestic violence accusations. By using the Campbell Danger Assessment in conjunction with purported victims, some communities have achieved a drastic drop in fatality statistics related to domestic violence. One example was in Newburyport, where domestic violence rates went down dramatically.

Dr. Astley wondered if the subcommittee could find, or create, the instruments necessary for identifying community members, particularly youth, in order to determine what could have, and what should have, been in place to prevent the kind of violence that happened to Lauren Astley, with the goal of getting the perpetrators of violence the help they need. Otherwise, they will repeat, and escalate, their violent behavior. As an example, he mentioned Jared Remy, who was in a number of relationships where great harm had apparently been done [before he murdered former girlfriend Jennifer Martel]. Dr. Astley asked if we could find a way to put a community team in place to monitor, in a nonintrusive way, situations where firm interventions were needed.

He said that shame is an emotion that is the basis for much criminality and violence, and that the subcommittee, which is composed of school principals and administrators, guidance counselors and wellness instructors, needs to identify those youths showing possible signs of shame as early as possible. He also suggested that the subcommittee's starting point might be to identify which assessment and intervention programs and tools

are already in place, and recommended the subcommittee members be tasked with compiling a list of appropriate tools.

He mentioned the work of Jungian analyst Charles Stewart, who said that there are 12 to 15 emotions that are capable of flooding the bearer with pain and confusion. These at-risk emotions include shame, hate, love, sexual attraction, fear and anxiety, isolation, rejection, sadness, loneliness, depression and grief. He wondered if the subcommittee could work toward identifying at-risk youths who have been grappling with these emotions, and present them with tools for coping with them.

Dr. Kahn said another item that threads its way through all these areas of social and emotional learning (SEL) and violence prevention is substance abuse prevention. The use of alcohol and marijuana leads to a lack of caring about other people's situations. We have to think about people's substance abuse in connection to violence prevention.

Ms. Brenda Ross said that the Middle School is looking to do a new fall message to parents, based on the concept of Breathe/Pause.

The SADD fall festival was going to take place at the Middle School on Sunday, Nov. 3, from 2 to 5 pm. It was scheduled to include a bounce house, a bake sale and pumpkin painting. It was geared toward families with younger children. It was mentioned that SADD is trying to meet more regularly.

Mr. Verhoosky mentioned that WaylandCares was looking at bringing in motivational speaker Keven Wanzer to address the idea of prevention during Winter Week. He is billed as a motivational comedian who wrote for the David Letterman show and was also a personal adviser to former First Lady Nancy Reagan.

Ms. Purser reported that the Middle School youth group of 7th graders had done an awesome job of promoting Social Night, which was attended by 125 kids. The Middle Schoolers have decided to make stress the focus of a campaign. Stress was chosen over two other potential topics: the Great Smokeout and White Ribbon Week.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31.