

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from October 12, 2022, Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:35 pm, in person and on Zoom in the Highland Room, Needham Town Hall.

Board in Attendance: Susan Patkin, David Bookston, Julie Stevens, Will Holland, Jill Mullaney, Nicole McMahon, Massie! Gallardo

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Minutes September 14, 2022. Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the September 14, 2022, minutes. Ms. Patkin seconded. The September 14 minutes unanimously approved by voice vote.

Update on Community Needs/Crisis Response

Ms. Shine noted that the MetroWest Survey results have been released. Depression has increased since the pandemic. The middle school numbers went from 9% to 13%. The high school numbers went from 13% to 22%. All the various behaviors also increased including self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Ms. Shine noted that Deb Schmill has been working on a program to reduce social media and internet use at the high school as a part of her Becca Schmill Foundation in memory of her daughter. As Mr. Bookston noted this is not surprising as the school connectedness was missing during COVID. The Board discussed what seems to also be an increase in bullying on social media and how the students are feeling impacted by this. Ms. McMahon also noted there has been an increase in vaping at both the middle and high school level. Ms. Shine discussed that the vaping task force was put into place before the pandemic and the nicotine cessation program was put into place through the school systems. Ms. Shine noted that she could discuss ongoing services with Karen Shannon, SPAN Coordinator.

Ms. Shine discussed the budget process. Some minimal increases in expenses will be requested in addition to a DSR IV that will request the ARPA funded FT position as part of the regular operating budget in FY 25.

Update on Programs, Services and Awards

Ms. Shine explained that there are 65 active clients with 29 youth on the waitlist. The waitlist is still fairly problematic since youth cannot access services as quickly as needed.

Mural Project: Youth & Family Services has started painting the mural project. The project is in the tunnel connecting Defazio Park and Pollard Middle School, which has also been the target of graffiti. Over 150 people have been part of painting this project so far. This project has been heavily supported by the Needham DPW. We are hoping that the project will be

completed in the next couple of weeks. Ms. Shine noted that Hometown Weekly covered the story in addition to the cable channel.

Y&FS is working with a local expert, Dr. Chris Willard, on a community presentation - **Mindful Resiliency in the "New Normal"** on November 9th. Chris Willard will explore the foundations of resilience, looking to positive psychology, neuroscience and mindfulness as he explores tools that have boosted human resilience in the face of adversity.

. We will discuss the most common mental health challenges our kids and teens are facing today, from depression and anxiety to addiction, self-harm and body image concerns, and ways to help support them. This workshop will include many experiential exercises along with simple takeaway tips for yourself and your communities. **To register:**

www.Needhamprograms.com

Ms. Gallardo volunteered to market Chris Willard through her various Facebook groups.

Youth & Family Services is working with the Needham Exchange Club on hosting **Ryan's Story** for the second year. Ryan's Story is a community presentation that is focused on bullying, social media use and suicide prevention. Last year this event was very successful and well received by the community. The presentation will consist of two presentations, one for parents and one for parents and children together. Thank you to the Needham Exchange Club for making this event possible. The Board continued to discuss stories like this and how it can be so impactful to the audience. Ms. Shine talked about another presentation by Kevin Hines who tells his story of coping with mental illness and a suicide attempt. Ms. Shine and the Board also mentioned the "Own your Own Peace Assembly" and "Minding your Mind." which have similar themes to the Hines program.

Y&FS is working with a local expressive art therapist, Tova Speter, on providing workshops for the community. These workshops will center around mindfulness and expressive arts. Two workshops were run last school year and both were full to capacity. **Tova Speter, LMHC** consultant based at Gorse Mill Studios in Needham, Massachusetts. With a Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling and Art Therapy, she has over 20 years of experience working at the intersection of arts and healing, and offers art therapy and mental health counseling services through her private practice. Tova is also a practicing painter, installation artist, and community muralist. All of her work is based on her belief that engaging in art-making is inherently therapeutic and formative.

Ms. Shine is planning a second Family Fun Night for early December modeled on the successful June 28 event.

The Peer Tutoring Program is starting back up. Staff are in the process of interviewing peer tutors and making matches with tutees. Match day is October 12th and we hope to help the matches make a connection as they get their year started. Staff are working on pairing 30 students to work with each other over the course of the year.

The VIP Program planning has started for this year. Staff have started working with big VIPs on getting set up and interviewing little VIPs so that pairs can be matched. We will be working with 20 pairs over the course of the year. Staff are also planning a training for the big VIPs as we have so many new students this year.

Volunteers Around Needham was a huge success this year. Youth & Family Services had over 30 volunteers who registered and earned community service hours. Staff hosted 6 days with Parks and Forestry, the Council on Aging, Needham Community Council, Needham Fire Station and the Needham Community Farm (2 days). Staff are planning dates for February and April school vacation weeks.

Y&FS is planning on hosting another Family Night in late fall. Another one was run this past summer was well attended. Families engaged in arts and crafts, played Bingo and enjoyed a build your own ice cream Sundae bar. The event helped to connect families while also connecting to our services and programs.

Youth & Family Services staff have taken on the role of the adult advisors in for the Take Back the Night club. This club organizes the Take Back the Night event every year in addition to building awareness around domestic violence.

Members of the Health and Human Services team have been trained to teach **Youth Mental Health First Aid virtually**. Youth Mental Health First Aid is a public education program that teaches participants how to recognize and respond to the signs and symptoms that suggest a potential mental health challenge, how to listen nonjudgmentally and give reassurance to a youth who may be experiencing a mental health challenge, and how to refer a person to appropriate professional support and services. Staff are planning to run a couple of classes in the fall. In addition, 5 staff have been trained to be teen Mental Health First Aid trainers which teaches teens how to help their peers experiencing a mental health challenge. Staff are working closely with the school department on training this to students in the schools.

Ms. Shine discussed group programming including multiple elementary school groups at Elliot and Sunita Williams, and a drop in mental health group at the High School during X-Block. Members discussed ensuring that students get credit for being in the room as the schools are much more strict about attendance this year. Ms. Shine also explained that there are 2 out of school time groups in the works, one for middle school youth and one for elementary students.

Fee Vote

The Board recommended having swag as an incentive for participating in the Peer Tutor program in addition to helping promote Youth & Family Services. The Board thought long and short sleeved tee shirts with the Youth logo would be the most popular and used item. Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the Peer Tutor Fee of \$55.00, \$10.00 more than last year, to cover the cost of the tee shirts. Ms. Gallardo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Ms. Shine noted this was the only fee required. The employment listing fee was eliminated and the Wilderness program is now part of the budget.

Old Business

The Board discussed the draft letter of September addressed to Ms. Fitzpatrick, Town Manager. Edits were made in a group discussion and the letter will be sent by Ms. Stevens later this week. A copy of the letter will be sent to Mr. Tim Muir McDonald, Director of Health and Human Services and the Select Board. The letter argues strongly for increased staffing and office space support for Youth and Family Services due to the length and acuity of the counseling wait list.

Mr. Bookston made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. Unanimous vote to adjourn by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm

Notes by: Faith Crisley, Recording Secretary
Edited by: Sara Shine, Director

