

**YOUTH COMMISSION MINUTES**

**Thursday, August 18, 2022**

**Town Hall, Conference Room B**

Attendance:

Board Members: Sandy Scott, Jennifer Lipton, Gily Schneider-Nachum, Sherry Clark, Gretchen Bean

Staff Members: June David-Fors, Director and Doreen Genna, Office Assistant

Student Visitor: Landon Jorgensen

1. Call Meeting to Order: Motion made by Gily Schneider-Nachum, seconded by Sherry Clark. Meeting begins at 7:11 pm
2. Roll Call Attendance: Jennifer Lipton, Sandy Scott, Sherry Clark, Gily Schneider-Nachum, Doreen Genna, Landon Jorgensen and June David-Fors
3. Date of Next Meeting: September 15, 2022
4. Review of Minutes: May 2022 and June 2022 minutes were handed out. Jennifer motioned to discuss the minutes at the next meeting since they are long, and this will give people more time to review them. Sandy seconds, Motion passes. Gily asks June if she can email them before the meeting.
5. Sherry Clark, Youth Commission Chair:

Overview of Protocols for Youth Commission Meetings: Sherry reviewed the meeting structure, procedures, setting meeting time, purpose of the white board, etc.

June and Sherry will work together to create the meeting agenda.

Sherry stated the plan is to have the meetings begin at 7:00 pm and end no later than 8:30 pm. In rare situations, the Commission can vote to extend meetings by 30 minutes when necessary and voted on in advance. Robert's Rules of Order will apply.

The meetings will follow the agenda and questions will be allowed at the end of the meeting. Jennifer asked if questions can be asked during the discussion. Sherry wants to hold off on questions until the end to stay on topic with the agenda. Gily thinks it is reasonable to ask questions during the meeting. Sherry will look into how open meeting rules may pertain to this. Jennifer suggested that Sherry give an estimated time for each agenda item.

The utilization of the white board was explained. Its purpose is to capture ideas and thoughts for possible brainstorming. Gily volunteered to document these ideas.

The protocol for visitors is that they will sit in the audience. If they would like to speak, they must be recognized by the Chair who will tell them if there is time at the end they may speak.

June reported that it is the goal of the Selectmen to eventually transition from in-person meetings to virtual meetings. The purpose is to increase public participation, comments, questions.

6. Director's Report:

In addition to the Board's initial request for information, June provided the following to the Board.

Family & Youth Services 2015 – 2021 Statistics – This data includes the number of residents served in each category of programming. These programs include mental health services, case management partnerships, referrals requested by residents, and the total residents served.

June pointed out that the total number of staff and interns varied with each year. For instance, during 2015 – 2017 our counselor position was vacant for 1 ½ years; we did not have an intern; or we had a 1<sup>st</sup> year intern whose hours were less than 2<sup>nd</sup> year interns. Although this is the case, the graph shows a continual, growing, increase in residents we assisted over these years.

When discussing the graph, Jennifer asked if a resident who accessed more than one service was counted on more than one column. June responded yes, and Jennifer suggested that the final column's title of "Total Residents Served" should be called "Total Services Rendered." Other members agreed.

June stated that at this point, the name change would not adequately reflect the actual figures documented in the graph. To change the name all of the data would have to be re-calculated. June explained that all of the prior years were calculated in the same manner. After a lengthy discussion, Jennifer motioned to move on from the discussion. Gily seconded, and it passes.

June was asked how a potential full-time staff member would be utilized. Board members discussed possible programs if there is additional staff. This could include support groups for parents, teens, seniors, and providing educational programs for the community.

June reported that she is involved in several coalition meetings in addition to her other duties. A full-time counselor can help with office coverage and the day-to-day operations of the department. This could free up some of June's time for grant-writing; coalition meetings and associated activities; contracting with consultants, etc.

Gily motions to vote on the ARPA money recommendation, and Sandy seconds the vote. It passes. The Commission votes on the motion to send a letter to the Selectmen to request ARPA money to increase the part-time position in the department of Family & Youth Services to a full-time position. Sandy makes a motion to vote, and Gily seconds the motion. The motion passes, with 4 members voting yes, one member abstaining, and one member being absent.

Sherry will send the above statement to the Selectmen. The Commission will discuss whether we will send additional information to the Selectmen at the next Commission meeting.

In addition to the data presented in the graph, June also reviewed the following information in response to the questions asked by Board Members:

**What are the new needs in the community and challenges the Department is facing?**

The addition of INTERFACE Referral Service has been extremely helpful. However, they too are impacted by the tsunami of need for mental health services. Subsequently, in February 2022, they did not accept new referrals in order to hire addition clinicians to meet this need. They also changed the wait for counseling from 14 days to 40 days. Thus, we have received several calls from families in crisis situations who cannot wait that long for service.

Although the State has put millions of dollars towards housing programs, we have found that many families often just miss the criteria for these programs. We work hard with several other town departments and organizations to assist these families, but it is not a simple solution. For instance, we have worked with 2 families for over the past year, and they just recently found placements.

There is an increased need for case management services to address the impact of the pandemic on every aspect of people's lives. This includes assisting residents to find affordable housing; working with residents who are at-risk of homelessness; families experiencing financial issues, often due to prolonged unemployment.

**What is the impact of having a part-time, non-benefitted counselor position versus full-time, benefitted?**

Hiring Challenge: A full-time position would significantly improve the hiring challenges the Department has faced in the recruitment process for this position. For instance, five years ago, it took 1 year and 8 months to fill the part-time counselor position. With the current efforts to recruit for this same position, the Town began to advertise for this position in October 2021, and to date, no resumes have been received.

In addition, adding benefits to this professional position will make it more competitive. Therapists are in very high demand and in order to keep up with the competition, the benefits need to be comparable. Such benefits would include paid time off for sick time, vacations, and holidays. The current part-time position offers no benefits.

A full-time counselor position can also “hold down the fort” and provide daily office coverage to free up some of the Director's time. This would allow for time spent on new activities that are in line with the Town Administrator's vision for the Department. This may include increased activity with grant-writing, contracting with consultants, etc.

**What services and programs could be provided with additional staffing levels?**

Relevant training programs could be provided for employees and the general public such as:

Providing a suicide prevention program to address the increased prevalence of teen suicides and attempts (emergency room visits for attempted suicide among teenage girls is up 51%).

We could offer the QPR Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention (Question, Persuade and Refer) training to town employees, school personnel and the public. This promotes learning the three steps that can help anyone prevent a suicide.

Make available to the community a Depression-Screening and Anxiety-Screening Questionnaire.

Provide an educational and support group for parents to assist them as they navigate their way through life challenges and opportunities as a result of the pandemic.

Seek grant funding to provided additional programs such as a trainer of Mental Health First Aid.

Create programming for youth with a focus on increasing connectedness and self-esteem.

Provide mental health, human service, wellness and prevention articles on the Town Website.

Write a News Letter about the Department including upcoming programs.

**How does the staffing level of Family & Youth Services compare to other comparable Towns?**

<b>TOWN</b>	<b>POPULATION</b>	<b>FTE PER POSITION</b>	<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>
<b>Holliston</b>	14,939	1.0 Director 1.0 Therapist/Court Diversion Coordinator .48 Clinician/Service Navigator (ARPA)	<b>2.48</b>
<b>Hopkinton</b>	18,758	1.0 Director 1.0 Social Worker/Program Coordinator .75 Social Worker/Case Manager 1.0 Drug Free Coordinator .25 Prevention Coordinator 10hrs (MassCALL3)	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Northborough</b>	15,741	1.0 Director .48 Counselor .48 Office Assistant	<b>1.96</b>
<b>Southborough</b>	10,421	1.0 Director 1.0 Assistant Director 1.0 Program Coordinator 1.0 Administrative Assistant	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Wayland</b>	13,882	1.0 Director 1.0 Assistant Director/Clinical Supervisor 1.0 Clinician .6 Youth Outreach Coordinator .2 Administrative Assistant	<b>3.8</b>
<b>Westborough</b>	21,499	1.0 Director .475 Senior Counselor .475 Social Worker 1.0 Administrative Assistant	<b>2.95</b>
<b>Westwood</b>	16,266	1.0 Director 1.0 Clinical Coordinator 1.0 Youth Services Counselor .5 Administrative Assistant	<b>3.5</b>

**What programs and activities are these Towns able to provide with their staffing levels?**

They are trainers for the QPR (Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention Question, Persuade and Refer) training.

They provide Depression-Screening and Anxiety-Screening Questionnaires made available to the public.

They facilitate and/or host Coalition Meetings such as the Northborough-Southborough Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, the Youth & Family Network Meetings, etc.

They are able to provide a wide range of community educational programming and workshops.

They are able to provide programs for youth, parents and families.

They are able to produce News Letters available to the public.

7. Board Members:

ARPA Proposal Discussion and Vote of Board Members (also previously noted):

Gily motions to vote on the ARPA money recommendation, and Sandy seconds the vote. It passes. The Commission votes on the motion to send a letter to the Selectmen to request ARPA money to increase the part-time position in the Department of Family & Youth Services to a full-time position. Sandy makes a motion to vote, and Gily seconds the motion. The motion passes, with 4 members voting yes, one member being absent and one member abstaining.

Sherry will send the above statement to the Selectmen. The Commission will discuss whether they will send additional information to the Selectmen at the next meeting.

Review of the High School Liaison Application: The revised Student Liaison Application was distributed to members. Landon Jorgensen will submit his application for the ARHS student liaison.

8. Other Business: Board Member Casey Rickli resigned; we will recruit another board member.

9. Adjourn: Jennifer motions to adjourn, Sandy seconds it. Meeting is adjourned at 8:45 pm