

Minutes for May 9 meeting of the Youth Advisory Council

The meeting was held in person at the Town Safety Building.

In attendance were: Ms. Pamela Cerne, Ms. Allison Kates, Chair Lisa Raftery and Youth & Family Services Director Jason Verhoosky. Also in attendance were Rev. Rebecca Cho, pastor at the Community Methodist Church, who will be replacing Rabbi Louis Polisson; and prospective member Ms. Sherre Greenbaum. (As stated at the April YAC meeting, Ms. Greenbaum is on the Board of Public Works and is interested in the opioid settlement fund task force as well as the YAC.) The minutes were taken by Mr. Peter Bochner.

Absent were Dr. Malcolm Astley (illness); Wayland School Resource Office Shane Bowles; Wayland Police Dept. Sgt. Tyler Castagno; Rabbi Louis Polisson; and Ms. Brenda Ross.

At 5:40, Chair Raftery made a motion to call the meeting to order. The motion was seconded by Ms. Pamela Cerne, then aye votes were made orally by Chair Raftery, Mr. Jason Verhoosky, Ms. Cerne and Rev. Cho.

Chair Raftery announced that the focus of the meeting was to be Mr. Verhoosky's recap of what the YAC had done this year.

Clinical milestones

Mr. Verhoosky said, "We have maintained a full clinical roster for the entire year, with an increased request for clinical services from both youths and families. Kelsey Sanclemente was promoted to assistant director. We made an offer on a new clinician last Thursday, are checking references, will have Paije [Gandolfi] with us if she accepts everything. She will be full-time."

Ms. Sherre Greenbaum asked where the new clinician would be situated? Mr. Verhoosky said, "Good question. She will be shadowing Kelsey for the first month. We do have some space identified at schools for in-person meeting and are reaching out to partners to identify other space. So we are identifying space but not for interpersonal clinical care. So we will continue remotely. She has great experience running things remotely.

She's graduating in a couple of weeks. She has worked at Wayside [MetroWest Community Services] as an intern. She has done early childhood development, therapeutic yoga and has worked in several hospitals. So she has experience working with ages 6 to 89."

WaylandCares

Mr. Verhoosky said, "We restarted in-person meetings in the fall of 2022. We provided over 12 presentations in different forms, different community organizations for

MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey. We offered Internet and technology safety meeting for grades 3 to 5. We provided intensive classroom education for fifth graders. We continue to provide wellness education, with a focus on alcohol and opioids.”

He said he was still trying to identify a date for one last Youth Night prior to summer vacation.

He continued. “We have provided education for parents regarding vaping, for both cannabis and tobacco. We will be offering a virtual training for social host liability tomorrow night (Wednesday, May 10). Other communities have made such training mandatory. There will be messaging at the high school, consisting of four banners, with the catchphrase, “Those who host lose the most,” explaining that liability consists of both civil and legal liability.

Mr. Verhoosky then addressed underage drinking. “From a legal standpoint, a lot of the teeth have gone away. A minor in possession is not a viable charge. The diversion program has gone away as well. For a first offense, the offender is essentially told, “Don’t do it again.” They put your name on a list, but who knows where that list is? Repeat offenders have not been exposed to any more punishment than first timers. We are trying not to make thing punitive, but to say there is consequence for your actions.

“Chief Burman will be there at the beginning of tomorrow night’s meeting.

“We will look at the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey as a community resource.

“We are moving forward with WaylandCares. We are looking at rebranding over the summer and into the fall. We are trying to have more of a public face to our message that we are a community coalition looking for active community participation.

“We’ve been invited as a cohort into MassCall Part B [Note: MassCall stands for Massachusetts Collaborative for Action, Leadership and Learning; it falls under the Substance Misuse Prevention Grant Program] with the town of Holliston taking the lead. Holliston has already gone through MassCall Part A. I’ve worked under an alcohol prevention grant, opioids, cannabis. A federal cohort receives \$250,000 for two years. Holliston gets the bulk of that sum. We get to utilize their funds.

“It is my hope that the town of Wayland will sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU). This will go before the Select Board, and then hopefully the town manager will approve.

Ms. Raftery said, “There are so many groups at Wayland High School trying to do same things as WaylandCares. Is there any thought of pulling representation of students into WaylandCares looking to go back to original model?

Mr. Verhoosky said, “We will have SADD there, as part of the basis of a coalition of 12 core sections. He listed nine of them: town staff, school staff, houses of worship, law enforcement, local business, public safety, parents, youth, healthcare providers. He said, “Anybody who lives or plays or works in Wayland want to hear your voice. We are the educational arm of Youth & Family Services. It takes a village to make things work.”

Chair Raftery said, “There are so many youth and staff members. The transition in youth involvement from the middle school to the high school is lacking. Some of the issues we need to address should be focused at the middle school.”

Mr. Verhoosky mentioned two program: Under the Influence and Empower. He said that, “Jane [Purser, former WaylandCares program coordinator] and I would go to the elementary schools and have lunchroom presentations about healthy decision-making. They would do a poster campaign, usually something very artistic. This is who we are and what we do.”

He said he had recently had a meeting with WaylandCare’s [current program coordinator] Meghan Wohlfarth to see if meeting at the middle school could be resumed.

Project overviews and future planning

Mr. Verhoosky said, “We will be back to doing Empower this summer, identifying which two weeks it will be held. SADD is not going to the SADD National meeting this summer. They will look to revisit that the following year.”

He mentioned the recent presentation by the Wayland police on driving under the influence. Students wore special goggles that simulated drunk driving, the police explained sobriety testing, students was told to attempt to standing on one foot. He reported the event had good student buy-in.

Chair Raftery said, “I follow SADD on Instagram. I heard [School Resource Officer] Shane [Bowles] say it went great.”

Ms. Greenbaum said, “I wish there was a WaylandCares for adults. The [Wayland Public] library does book clubs and speaker series. It would be nice if that were expanded a bit.”

Mr. Verhoosky asked, “Are you looking for something focused on health-related topics, healthy decision-making, but for the adult population?” Ms. Greenbaum said yes.

Opioids education, funding and community outreach

Mr. Verhoosky said, “I had a meeting this afternoon to finalize an initial presentation to the Select Board on [this coming] Monday, to propose the initial concepts on what we’re going to do with part of the funds.

He said, “We will start with a small amount of local data as well as regional data, from the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, but will also discuss adult use. This will include overdose statistics at local and regional levels. We will also discuss pathways to addiction, specifically how, from a youth perspective, how the top three concerns of alcohol, cannabis and tobacco use lead to other addictions. At that point we will do an overview of what we know currently.”

He said, “So far, there has been just one settlement. We have \$94,952 in our possession. That is slated to be \$451,000 before 2038. This involved a couple of rolled-over sums. The areas of impact will include prevention; community education; harm reduction and destigmatizing; direct support of active users and their families through direct intervention; wraparound services; providing of physical supplies, including Narcan and fentanyl test strips; and providing training to town and school staff.

A portion of the funding will go to the hiring of a social worker or social outreach coordinator, who will be part of the community engagement support staff. This will be a licensed clinical worker. We are recommending a full-time position, with a salary of \$63K annually, for three years, with the hope that, after that, the town will incorporate the position into the town budget. We have also have made a presentation for the position to be part-time, at 21 hours per week, at a salary of \$38,220. Most communities have this position, although a lot of them are sharing someone. The individual would be housed here in public safety building with the police department. The individual will be looking at multiple tasks: domestic abuse and violence, hoarding, but nothing in a criminal capacity.”

Ms. Allison Kates said that on call involving someone with a mental health issue, the social worker goes along with the police. For many people, the first inquiry is a 911 call.

Chair Raftery said, “It can be a complicated way to get help.”

Ms. Kates said, “Sometimes if you need help and then see how many steps it takes, you might just say, “Screw it.”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “Originally there was a lot of pushback to the idea of hiring this position, but now we have a police chief begging for it, a police department in favor of it, the community in favor of it and the funds.

“We are also looking for \$5000 to \$8000 annually to help subsidize elementary school staff wellness. We will bring wellness into the elementary school level at a .4 level. Hopefully for all of fifth grade, maybe some of fourth grade.

Ms. Kates invoked the Just Like Me program, and asked if kids were still doing Open Circle.

Mr. Verhoosky said he did not know the answer to that.

Ms. Kates said, “Kids today are not the kids of yesterday.”

Mr. Verhoosky said he was looking to allocate \$8K in year one for a panel of speakers, including Dr. Ruth Potee discussing the science of addiction, and [former NBA player] Chris Herren sharing his experiences with substance abuse. In subsequent years, \$4K will be allocated.

Narcan

[Naloxone nasal spray, or Narcan, is increasingly being used to treat narcotic overdose in an emergency situation. It is currently available only through emergency providers.]

Mr. Verhoosky said, “We have budgeted \$3500, for 10 boxes of publicly available Narcan. At \$350 per box, that will get us 10 boxes. There will be one box in every public building, each building would have two to four doses. The boxes are not typically locked, since they are for emergency use.

Ms. Kates said she knew of two students at Harvard trying to get Narcan boxes into train stations, because there are a lot of ODs at train stations.

Mr. Verhoosky said, “There’s nothing but benefit to Narcan. There are no negatives. It knocks opioids off an individual’s opioid receptors. The more we can normalize the use of Narcan, the more we can get out there. [Wayland Town Nurse] Michele Schuckel has entered us into the community Narcan supply, where we could get free Narcan, until the time it becomes an over-the-counter drug. After that we will be looking to partner with several organizations, including local businesses.”

“In addition, community education, providing free training in the administration of Narcan and free availability of Narcan. Right now you can only get Narcan through emergency providers. We will train the town staff and school staff. We are seeking different ways to make Narcan available to the public, with no questions asked,

Asked about the possibility of running out, Mr. Verhoosky said, “Someone will monitor the supplies on a weekly basis. If someone takes one, we’ll restock it. It will be like a first-aid kit or an Automatic Electronic Defibrillator, it will be seen everywhere.

“We would have a PR campaign to announce it’s there. It only takes 20 to 30 minutes of training to learn how to administer Narcan.” Town staff and school staff will receive training.

Chair Raftery asked, “Do we know if peer towns are doing?”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “It is actively being discussed by them. Funding makes every town talking about it openly. We are looking for clear and open input from them.”

He noted that 60% of the settlement funds go to the state. The remaining 40% goes to towns, based on population.

He said, "We're not a community seeing a lot of open drug use. But we are also making publicly aware that we are not immune to such activity either."

Chair Raftery said, "I hope this is something we can expand to kids after they leave town to go to college. I hope they're part of this somehow."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "It's a community issue. We are looking much more heavily at cannabis, prescription drugs and alcohol. Few addicts will say, 'My first choice was opioids. They work up to it through a series of other substances.'"

"We have also allocated \$1K per year for web hosting and online resources. We are looking at a couple of different budgets. If everything we're asking for gets approved, that comes to \$81,200 per year, leaving us with a current balance of \$13K of funds not allocated, so we still have a "slush fund." If only the part-time position is okayed, we'd be asking for a total of \$55,720, leaving us a balance of \$39.

"Our big ask is the full-time slot. The money has to come from the general fund, then get approved by the Select Board, then, if approved, it gets reallocated into the town fund, where we can appropriate it.

"In the future, there will be a warrant article every year for these funds."

Ms. Greenbaum asked, "So the first settlement did not go through the town meeting?"

Mr. Verhoosky said, "That's correct. In the future, because we are an open town meeting community, it would have to put on a warrant article and go before Town Meeting every year, although in theory you could keep doing it the other way. This allows the town to receive public input. There are some attempts to change state law, including by the Attorney General's office. If town meeting votes against how the money would be spent, you still have money, then you could go before the Select Board and try to overrule the town meeting vote.

Chair Raftery said, "These would be major topics to vote on for a town meeting, to put how to use \$94,952 before it."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "My hope is, it will not have to go before town meeting."

He said he would be going before the Select Board on Monday night to present, along with Wayland Town Manager Michael McCall, Michele Schuckel, Police Chief Burman, Director of Health Julia Junghanns and Fire Chief [Neil McPherson]. We are looking for input from other communities. Then the plan is to start a task force.

SBIRT

Mr. Verhoosky said, "I have been invited onto a panel on SBIRT to participate in a study coordinated by the MetroWest Hospital looking to evaluate the effectiveness of SBIRT. For the study, 20 communities will be assigned a full-time SBIRT coach to better tune the SBIRT process. I hope we will be selected. I've been told we're pretty high on the list."

Violence Prevention

Mr. Verhoosky said, "We are working with the town Violence Prevention Task Force on the flowchart with the narrative of being in control, explaining what happens when you do report, that you are supposed to be released at hospital. The flowchart will be posted throughout school. A good deal of testing was done on the flowchart by two WHS students.

Ms. Kates said, "There is no such thing as too much exposure. Just because there's a sign in the bathroom doesn't mean they're gonna see it." She noted that the middle school is slated to have its own version of the flowchart in the fall.

Mr. Verhoosky noted that the Violence Prevention Task Force is keeping statistics as to how often the flowchart is being used.

Mr. Bochner reminded the attendees of the Laura Dunne Astley Foundation event on May 24 at Wayland High School. The event will be the premiere of a new video, featuring experts on the subject of relationship violence and what people can do about it.

Chair Raftery made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 p.m. Ms. Kates seconded the motion. The motion was approved with ayes by Ms. Cerne, Ms. Kates and Chair Raftery.

[Note: The final YAC meeting of the season will be held on June 6 at Congregation Or Atid, located at 97 Concord Road, starting at 6 p.m.]