

Minutes for the Youth Advisory Council meeting of 1/10/2023

The meeting was held in person in the training room of the Town Safety Building. In attendance were (in alphabetical order); Dr. Malcolm Astley; School Resource Officer Shane Bowles; Wayland Police Department Sgt. Tyler Castagno; Ms. Pamela Cerne; Chair Lisa Raftery; Ms. Brenda Ross; and Director of Youth & Family Services Mr. Jason Verhoosky. Absent were Ms. Allison Kates and Rabbi Louis Polisson. Peter Bochner took the minutes.

Chair Lisa Raftery made a motion to start the meeting at 6:03 p.m. Her motion was seconded by Sgt. Tyler Castagno, and all in favor, via "aye" were Dr. Malcolm Astley, Ms. Pamela Cerne, Ms. Brenda Ross, Chair Raftery, Det. Castagno and School Resource Officer Shane Bowles.

The minutes from the previous meeting on Oct. 18, 2022 were accepted with one minor change. Chair Raftery made a motion to approve the minutes. Sgt. Castagno seconded the motion, all in favor, via "aye," were Dr. Astley, Chair Raftery, Ms. Cerne, Ms. Ross, Det. Castagno and Youth Officer Bowles.

New business

Sgt. Castagno announced that the Citizens Police Academy would be held every Wednesday in March, from 6:30 to 8:30, beginning on March 1. The series of meetings would include discussions on criminal and constitutional law, domestic violence, motor vehicle laws, the history of policing in Wayland, community relations, investigations, firearms training and more. Youth Officer Bowles said that previous academies had been attended by Wayland citizens from 18 years to age to 80. They have included pairing citizens with an officer to do ridealongs. So far the information has only gone out on Facebook. In response to a question, Sgt. Castagno said it was hoped that any interested citizen would attend all five evenings.

Mention was also made of police training academies that are held at several colleges, including Fitchburg State. Applicants pay their own way. This has in several instances led to being hired by the Wayland Police Department. However, Youth Officer Bowles said that enrollments are smaller than in the past, as is the grade requirements. He said that it used to be common to see applicants get a grade of 98 or higher; now successful scores are in the 70s.

Dr. Astley discussed the relations of policing policy to community, noting it was an area "full of potential conflict" that involves very sensitive matters. He said, "The larger issue is trying to better articulate how we can work together; no community can exist without policing." However, he said, there are disparities about what policing is and what it should be. He asked, "How can we promote that? Is it Youth & Family Services? Some might say that's a stretch; I don't think it is. It would be worthwhile if we can develop that together."

Mr. Verhoosky said he valued the partnership with the Wayland police department highly, and asked if there was anything the YAC can do to support work at the high school and middle school. He said, "I think incredibly highly of you, and the more and more you can expose community to who you are, the better."

Youth Officer Bowles said, in response to Dr. Astley's comments, that the relationship between the police and the community is "a scary concept but an interesting one." He noted, "Everything used to be much different."

Sgt. Castagno said that now when a police officer does "something dumb, they're on their own." For instance, he noted that the Wayland police had joined a peaceful protest to show their solidarity with concerned citizens over what happened to George Floyd. He described Wayland as being in somewhat of a bubble. He said he coaches three teams. "The kids see us and know us."

He said, getting back to the Citizens Police Academy, that one time someone who was "very anti-police" came to the academy and "did a 180."

Dr. Astley asked if the YAC could do something like a Youth Night. Mr. Verhoosky said there is nothing stopping the YAC from throwing an event. Youth Officer Bowles said, "We've talked about that in the past, but for various reasons, we learned we couldn't do a barbecue. It would be nice to get some younger guys out there. Tyler [Castagno] and I grew up in this town."

Youth Officer Bowles said that most surrounding towns have a kid camp, a weeklong camp that runs 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. He said his daughter did one in Marlborough, and that Sudbury and Hudson do them. He said the kids learn about [the dangers of] drugs. It was sort of a "Scared Straight" program. He said it's something that "we're gonna try to do, trying to get back out there again instead of staying behind the wall."

Dr. Astley asked if the Wayland Police Department has a police community member steering committee.

Youth Officer Bowles said, "We have the Wayland Police Association. That would be where that would come from. We have a new association board – it's only 10 days old – that consists of me and two other guys. I'm the president, I'm talking about trying a whole bunch of new stuff." He said, however, that some of what Dr. Astley was asking about would be at the police chief level.

Dr. Astley said, "If it's just coming from you, I don't think the sensitive issues are going to surface."

Youth Officer Bowles repeated, "That might be in the chief's wheelhouse."

Sgt. Castagno said, "There is a position for community service officer, but it's unfilled, and been vacant for six years. We're not happy it's vacant. We're hoping it will be filled shortly."

Dr. Astley said, "I hope we can put it on the agenda as a standing item. but we need groups outside working with you. We need to get citizens involved. There's a lot of baggage to review, including the airing of tough problems that don't get talked about to make community safer, as opposed to a splintered effort."

At this point Ms. Ross said that she would have to leave early to attend the Wayland Town Library's Great Presenters event that night, which was to feature Steve Robbins on songwriting. She said the series was sponsored by the Wayland Town Library.

Chair Raftery asked if there was anything else from the community.

Dr. Astley said he also wanted to mention the report from the White Ribbon Committee. He was told that was further down on the agenda.

Clinical update

Mr. Verhoosky said that as of Thursday Jan. 12, Ms. Kelsey Sanclemente will be promoted to assistant director of Youth & Family Services (Y&FS). He said that Y&FS is working with Kate [Ryan, Human Resources manager) in HR to post for the other clinician position. He said, "We are at the top of the priority to get that posted, and then we will begin the interview process. We will maintain the same model as before. Kelsey will continue to be at capacity to have long-term clients, continue to have space for short-term clients, and have the ability to make referrals." He said Y&FS is still seeing a steady stream of requests for services, and a lot of them are being helped in short-term fashion. He said that Y&FS is not seeing people searching for a lot of long-term care.

In terms of referrals, he said, "We work readily with all school counselors. We have information on the town website and the Wayland cares website. We put ourselves out as much as possible without marketing ourselves. We get referrals through the police department."

Chair Raftery said, "I don't know if people know you exist."

Mr. Verhoosky said he was having the same conversation with [WaylandCares Youth Outreach Coordinator] Meghan Wohlfarth. He said she was doing a press release for Youth Night. He said that during our presentations for the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, a lot of questions came up, with attendees asking, "Why don't you do that?" And our answer is, "Oh, we *do* do that."

Sgt. Castagno asked what the average case load volume was. Mr. Verhoosky said, "Kelsey is seeing 18 to 20 clients per week. She's also doing group work at the middle school and high school, and is still seeing three to four requests for new services every

week.” He added that he personally knows two people to recruit for the open slot at Y&FS.

Dr. Astley asked, “Working with the town and the new budget, should we be trying to specialize HR?”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “I don’t know if that’s our role. But I don’t know if they’re trying to expand funding.” He said Y&FS “has a slight cost savings from promoting Kelsey. We are maintaining Dossie [Kahn, former assistant director of Y&FS) in an outside supervisory role.”

Ms. Cerne discussed Community Mental Health Centers. Det. Castagno said such resources could expedite triage.

Dr. Astley asked, “Of the three to four new applicants approaching Kelsey each week, can we say that, after a month, 60% of them are settled? Can we pin it down more?”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “Nobody that comes to us is turned away for any reason. At the end of the third session, they are either getting services from us, or are being referred, or we can check in with them to see if they have tools and resources they need.”

Dr. Astley said, “That’s a wonderful snapshot. I just wanted to be sure that you have the resources you need.”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “We want people to feel like they can reach out to us, and not just to be put on a wait list. We want to grow our group, to expand our reach.”

He noted that, due to the pandemic, there has been an increase in the town’s youth in terms of general anxiety and depression, and a decrease of coping and feeling comfortable in social situations. He said, “Their emotional maturity level is a year or two behind, because of the isolation, separation and everything else that they’ve experienced during the pandemic.”

Chair Raftery said that she hoped that the calendar for meetings for the first half of 2023, a hybrid model that includes in-person and virtual meetings, works for everyone. These include in-person meetings on Tuesdays at 5 p.m., and remote meetings on Thursdays at 6 p.m.

School Resource Officer Bowles announced he had to leave the meeting to coach his team that night in Marlborough. Before leaving, he said, “We have the PTO meeting and panel at the high school on Friday morning at 8:30 to discuss the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey results with Allyson [Mizoguchi, WHS principal]. Is there anything you want to focus on?” he asked Mr. Verhoosky, who answered, “Whatever you want.”

Mr. Verhoosky mentioned that a mental health awareness overview was being conducted for Molly [Pistrang-Gomes] and the staff of REACH.

Mr. Verhoosky said that one of the findings of the Adolescent Health Survey was that 10% of youths have been in cars with drivers under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The number of youths who have attempted suicide is also scary.

A highlight sheet is on the waylandcares.com website. He said, "It's much easier to take in rather than the full 130-page report."

Dr. Astley said, "That should be an agenda item: to follow up with a highlighted 11-page document."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "We can do a press release on the key indicators and distribute it through the town portal website."

Dr. Astley said, "I hate to hit you with questions pressing for information about what your plan is."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "We list the services we provide, and use that data to help steer our work. We look at it as a community-wide effort."

Chair Raftery said, "The schools provide the survey. The night we attended to talk to parents wasn't well-attended."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "If we speak to 20 parents, that's a banner night."

Chair Raftery said, "It was good to have discussion topics, such as 'Here are questions to ask your children'."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "We can continue to bring up talking points."

Chair Raftery asked, "How do you talk to kids about stress vs. how was your day? How do parents talk to their kids?"

Mr. Verhoosky said, "One of the other evening presentations was aimed at younger parents with younger kids. We discussed technology; what to discuss before they get their kids a phone; setting boundaries; and earning privileges vs. simply being gifted with technology. If you can set a healthy foundation, you have a better chance of having better decision-making."

Chair Raftery said, "Educators are doing a great job of setting the stages for parents to talk to kids."

Dr. Astley asked, "How does the Board of Health fit with parents and their authority?"

Mr. Verhoosky said, “We work with the Board of Health on a number of things, such as mental health referrals, and occasional work on COVID things, but the overlap is minimal between the two.”

Sgt. Castagno said, “I don’t know if the [Board of Health] would be the best support for what you’re dealing with.”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “Their connection would be school nursing.”

Dr. Astley said, “That’s a huge connection.” Mr. Verhoosky said he agreed. Dr. Astley said a focus should be kids who are depressed about breakups.

Mr. Verhoosky said, “Based on the data, when it comes to who students view as trusted adults, school nursing came out very low. Frankly, I was surprised by that. The highest level is parents or trusted family member, then friends, then trusted teacher or coach.’

Chair Raftery said the low ranking of a school nurse was not surprising, because the school nurse’s office offers no privacy. Mr. Verhoosky agreed, saying, “I cannot imagine having a confidential conversation in that office.”

Chair Raftery said, “We should have a sheet -- boil the talking points down to a certain sheet that says, ‘These are the hot topics, and this is how to bring up the topics with your kids’.”

Sgt. Castagno said, “We need indicators to start a conversation, about stress, about how kids deal with their parents divorcing, and what therapy they might need for that, or how a kid can file paperwork if their parents hit them.”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “We have been doing a lot. There’s more to come. We are already in planning for next round of implementation. That will be done by the end of spring.”

Asked if he thought the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey would go back to paper vs. being administered online, Mr. Verhoosky replied, “I believe not. They viewed this last round as a success “ –it’s here, it’s done.” There were issues signing in with the individualized codes that were geared to make it feel more anonymous.” He explained that the students took the survey on school-issued computers, then were given a unique code.

Asked if the survey could be expanded to involve other communities, Mr. Verhoosky said, “We talk about this regularly.”

He said the next WaylandCares meeting would be Tuesday, Jan. 17.

He said Y&FS is working with a couple of other towns on a series of training and education podcasts, covering subjects such as how to talk to your kids, the effect of substances on the teenage brain. He said the series will use photos of the MEGA Brain [a

15-foot-high brain that a town can rent that shows what happens to one's brain when substances are consumed]. He said the town of Hudson requested to do the event virtually rather than in-person, because it wasn't getting good in-person turnouts.

Opioids settlement funding

Through opioids settlement funds, Y&FS is going to work with the town's physicians on administering fresh NARCAN. Mr. Verhoosky said that some training is available to the public and that Wayland Public Health Nurse Michele Schuckel is now a trainer. He said the training includes the use of fentanyl test strips, which lets an individual know if fentanyl is in a substance. The strips are free from the state clearing house.

Asked if he would you ever speak to SADD group about this, Sgt. Castagno suggested it would be done through the wellness program. He offered his perspective about when talking to seniors the discussions are more honest. "When I talk to seniors, I say, if you're gonna drink, be responsible. Watch out for roofies."

Mr. Verhoosky said he had just finished a vaping education class with freshmen, and it was much more introductory in nature. It was different with seniors. With them, he said, "It was a very real conversation."

Sgt. Castagno mentioned alcohol education, and that it involved the lesson that "if you're making drink at home, it will be far stronger than what you're going to get served at a bar." He noted that in terms of underage drinking incidents, "Wayland has been very quiet for the past few years."

Mr. Verhoosky said Feb. 9, the date that had been planned in to bring in former NBA player Chris Herren to discuss substance abuse and opioid addiction, had to be changed because Chris Herren was going to be in North Carolina at that time. He said, "We are now looking at dates in May."

Mental health training

On Wednesday Dec. 14, an all-day training session had taken place at the Public Safety Building on mental health and suicide prevention. The session was attended by 20 people, consisting of police officers, dispatchers, public health professionals, HR personnel, community members and Y&FS. The session included tips on recognizing indicators and how to engage, support and assist these people.

Asked if it were a one-time event, Mr. Verhoosky replied, "With that specific partnership it was a one-time event. Typically it is free of charge. Wayland's Public Health Nurse Michele Schuckel, audited it and has become a trainer.

One of the attendees mentioned the need to create a database of all the regional support groups, such as AA and NA, in the surrounding communities, in order to see where there

are gaps. The attendee said, “Most people go outside their own community when seeking a support group, particularly for substance use.”

Youth Leadership

Mr. Verhoosky then gave a Youth Leadership update. He said that Youth Night Out would be held at the high school field house on Friday, Feb. 10. He said that 175 middle schoolers have already signed up. It is open to sixth, seventh and eighth graders. He described it as “a night of fun, good times, games, music and food. The event is conducted in partnership with the police department and SADD. The town’s recreation department will run the games and, because they have some additional funds, they will bring in some inflatables.”

Sgt. Castagno said that members of the police department can be there and will put in for overtime. He asked Mr. Verhoosky to email him as to how many police are needed. He noted that when we saw how many kids were going to be there, the number of chaperones was beefed up. “We need at least 16,” he said.

Mr. Verhoosky said the goal is to do this event three to four times a year.

Sgt. Castagno suggested putting the fact that 175 kids were attending on a bulletin board. Mr. Verhoosky noted that previously, the highest attendance at one of the Youth Night Out events was 70. He also noted that this is the first one back since pre-COVID.

On the subject of middle school Youth Leadership, Mr. Verhoosky said the group is small, consisting of two middle-schoolers hanging out with Meghan [Wohlfarth] and him. He said they were trying to grow those numbers.

He said that SADD is working on some things, including fundraising efforts, in an attempt to address impaired driving and the perception of lack of harm with cannabis use. He quoted a statistic from the Adolescent Health Survey that over 46% of high schoolers do not see driving under the influence of cannabis as a problem.

Sgt. Castagno said that in Wayland, after marijuana was decriminalized, the interest in it was not so great anymore.

Mr. Verhoosky said that vaping and edibles are now higher on the list, noting, “There are now so many other options besides smoking that are more discreet.”

Violence Prevention

Mr. Verhoosky said that the Violence Prevention task force is very active. Its next meeting will be on Jan. 23 at 7 pm. It will be virtual through Zoom. The session is going to be a follow-up on the task force’s work with a flyer on what happens in terms of reporting potential violence and breaking down Title 9. He said there is fear and anxiety over the fact that this trauma is no longer under your ownership, because other people take over. Wayland students are creating a poster, a long-format version that goes into

what happens when you report, and something that's more absorbable with a QR code that takes you to the confidential reporting form. Students are reluctant to report because either they don't know what's going to happen or they fear what's going to happen. From a youth perspective, a lot has happened but it seems very slow to them. We want to address situations such as racism and sexual assault.

Mr. Verhoosky said that Allyson [Mizoguchi] and Scott [Parseghian, wellness director] were positive about the possible use of the referral form.

Dr. Astley asked, "Can we move towards some kind of pilot effort? That's where we are. The form is meant as an awareness-raising device. That's why it's called Lean On Me, to get people who need assistance the assistance they need."

He said, "There's the idea route and then there's working with what exists. They have a form that students use, but it doesn't have all the indicators. These are things you see. We don't know where the current high school form goes. Does it go to the counseling folks? It needs to go to the intervention committee, so that they can provide intervention options."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "Currently, a team receives the email, because it's confidential. You have the option to put your name on it. If not, there's no way to figure out who sent it. Wellness and guidance teams can assess what's being reported."

Dr. Astley asked, "If the submitter is not identified, can they really address the topic?" Mr. Verhoosky said, "It's on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if someone said, 'I'm concerned about Susie, 'they can reach out to Susie, and said 'We just want to check on you.'"

Chair Raftery said she had concerns about the terminology being too mature for students.

Mr. Verhoosky said, "Overreporting is better than under-reporting."

Chair Raftery said it was a lot to take in, but it's a comprehensive list. It's a good tool to provide to people who are trained."

At 7:57, Chair Raftery made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. Astley.

There was a final comment by Dr. Astley that David Adams, the founder and director of Emerge, would be talking at the May meeting of the White Ribbon group at the Sudbury Library from 7 to 8:15. The topic would be "On Watching Dad: What We Learned from Our Dads."