

Minutes for Youth Advisory Council (YAC) meeting of 2/15/2023

The meeting was held remote via Zoom. In attendance were (in alphabetical order); Dr. Malcolm Astley; Wayland Police School Resource Officer Shane Bowles; Ms. Pamela Cerne; Ms. Allison Kates; Rabbi Louis Polisson; Chair Lisa Raftery; Ms. Brenda Ross; Youth and Family Services Assistant Director Ms. Kelsey Sanclemente; and Youth & Family Services Director Mr. Jason Verhoosky. Mr. Peter Bochner took the minutes.

Absent was Sgt. Tyler Castagno of the Wayland Police Dept.

The meeting started with noting a Celebration Day for Youth Officer Shane Bowles. Chair Lisa Raftery said, "We are thankful for all that you do today and every day." She was referring in particular to events such as swatting and calling in fake or hoax threats to the Wayland public schools, forcing emergency personnel to go to the schools. She mentioned that Natick was hit recently. "We appreciate the Wayland police and fire departments.

Youth Officer Bowles said, "Something like this happens all over the place. Last year we had bomb threats. The call first comes to the police department, not the schools. The message is serious, and we have to take it very seriously. The schools are listed in alphabetical order; they went A through I. So hopefully we get one through school vacation. There's no way to find out who does this. The call can go through 10 countries.

Ms. Allison Kates said, "You'd think they're be more creative than alphabetical order."

Chair Raftery said, "We now know the town does not support virtual meetings on Thursdays or Fridays. So we will find a good option for the rest of year. Let's get to some business. Chair Raftery then made a motion to approve the minutes from the Jan. 10, 2023 YAC meeting. Ms. Brenda Ross seconded the motion. Ms. Allison Kates suggested she should not vote, because she was absent from the January meeting. Ms. Pamela Cerne said aye. Dr. Malcom Astley abstained because he hadn't read the minutes. Rabbi Polisson abstained because he also was not at the January meeting. Youth Officer Bowles pointed out that he did not have voting privileges. Therefore, Chair Raftery announced the council would hold off on approving the minutes until the March meeting.

Board updates

Rabbi Polisson said, "Back in November, my family decided it would relocate this coming summer and move closer to family in the Connecticut/New York area. The Wayland Interfaith leaders will likely be appointing Rev. [Rebecca] Cho to take my place. She will join us at our Zoom meeting in May. This is bittersweet news for me, to be moving out of state.

[Note: Rev. Cho, pastor of the Community United Methodist Church in Wayland, has expressed interest in filling Rabbi Polisson's spot on the YAC. He has communicated this

information to the Wayland Interfaith Leaders Association (WILA, formerly the Wayland Clergy Association) who will then confirm Rev. Cho's appointment to the YAC.]

He said that for the end-of-season in-person June YAC meeting on June 8, "I will host you all at Congregation Or Atid, with a light vegetarian dinner at 6 p.m. to celebrate the end of the year. Reverend Sho will join us." He said he would be at all the YAC meetings between now and June.

Chair Raftery said, "We have discussed inviting [Dr.] Dossie [Kahn] to that meeting."

She added that she had learned that the scheduled date for the April meeting, April 6, turned out to be the first night of Passover, and so that date will be bumped to one more convenient for all.

She asked if there were any other board updates. She asked if there was any update on the upcoming Wayland Police Citizens Academy. There was none. She then asked if there was anything that anyone wanted to share that was not on the agenda? There were no replies.

Next Ms. Kelsey Sanclemente, the new assistant director of Youth & Family Services, provided a clinical update. She said that she continues to be busy while maintaining an active caseload and keeping openings for families in Wayland. She said she is leading a social skills group at Wayland Middle School, in person. However, most meetings with students are remote at this point in time, mostly on Zoom, but some students I meet in person with. "It's a nice balance."

Asked about her caseload, she said that she is working with a few more families, but tries to keep open spots, as well as meeting with more regular clients.

Chair Raftery asked if there were any other clinical updates.

Mr. Jason Verhoosky said that he was talking to Kate [Ryan] in HR. He said, "We are in the final stages of getting a posting up after we had to make one small correction, to meet full-time status. He said it should be going up by tomorrow, and then we can officially begin our search for new clinician. He said that although the town uses a host of hiring services, he was reaching directly out to a handful of candidates.

WaylandCares

Mr. Verhoosky said, "We have been meeting on the third Tuesday of each month, but the February meeting will be pushed back one week to Feb. 28 due to school vacation. He said at the meeting attendees will review data for the MetroWest Health Foundation survey, as well as taking on violence prevention work. The meeting will be at 9 a.m. at the high school, either in the faculty lounge or the guidance conference areas.

He said the only other update he had is that, "We had a great Youth Night on Friday (Feb. 10), with help from [Sgt.] Tyler [Castagno] and Shane [Bowles], and the town's

recreation department. There were 90 middle school students, playing minigolf, inflatable football toss, and eating pizza. “It was interesting to watch them figure out how to socialize, as soon as they let their guard down, everyone settled down and had a great time. Hopefully we will be doing another one in April.”

Chair Raftery said she had heard a good deal of positive feedback regarding the events and “kids being kids again.”

Mr. Verhoosky said that on behalf of WaylandCares, he participated in Winter Week at the high school by doing a presentation on communication to 110 high school students. At the end of the presentation, he said that a teacher came up and asked for more projects like that one. Part of the presentation involved building airplanes; the students had the opportunity to build an airplane and then create directions for building airplanes. They learned how challenging it can be when taking things at face value. He said that the teachers told him that how great it was to see students working as a group together again.”

Dr. Astley said it was good to see such efforts restarting. He said, “I’m hoping we can recharge these events with more parent participation. I don’t know if you’ve had time to think about that. Parents who can bring items regarding their concerns, and bring about discussions of mental health.

Mr. Verhoosky said that one of the initiatives he was working on with Sejal [Srinivasan, current WHS PTO president] and Michele [Schuckel, Wayland’s public health nurse] deals with collecting parent information, and encouraging more participation from them.

Ms. Kelsey Sanclemente left the meeting at 6:30 to meet with a client.

Mr. Verhoosky said that WaylandCares is open to anyone in the community. Historically, the group has been populated by parents of youths at various school levels.

Ms. Ross asked about the group’s “lens of inclusion,” and whether it invited ableism, or Metco parents? “Are we putting that into the mix to be inclusive in your engagements?”

Mr. Verhoosky replied, “For Youth Nights, we have offered transportation to Boston area residents. In terms of accessibility regarding physical participation, we always try to hold physical and non-physical activities, such as board games and crafts.

Ms. Ross asked if Boston area residents and “not able” students were participating in such events.

Mr. Verhoosky said, “We have to go through Youth Night and sort it out. We had a buddy family program pre-pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, we did see Boston area residents participating at a higher level.”

Opioid settlement planning

Mr. Verhoosky said, “We have been in process of planning around that. [Former Boston Celtic] Chris Herren is now booking into the fall of 2023. We are seeing if we can lock down a date. In the meantime, we are looking at other speakers in the recovery community, to see who we can bring in immediately. We are working on a public message campaign regarding fentanyl use, intentional and unintentional. We are working on NARCAN training with first responders. We want to make sure it is readily available in all facilities. We want to reduce the stigma of using NARCAN, and normalize its availability.

Chair Raftery said, “There has been talk into looking into community advisement group. What are the rules and parameters around that?”

Mr. Verhoosky said that the date with Chris Herren will be in the fall, and that is top of list. We are trying to lock in the date. Learn to Cope is the organization we are using to find someone in the meantime. They are a great resource.

Violence Prevention (VP)

Chair Raftery mentioned the discussion related to VP that occurred at the very end of the January meeting. She said that Malcolm is working on a project, the Lean on Me document. She said it currently consisted of 38 items in various orders in which someone can hurt themselves or others. She asked for the most recent status of the form.

Dr. Astley said, “There is currently a link to the form on the high school website. But in terms of bullying or violence, it is a fairly blank form. It is going to be posted at various places in the high school.

He said, “The current form could be beefed up. Some of it might be overwhelming to students. It could be improved; the process could be improved. But I hesitate to tell the high school counseling department what to do.”

Ms. Kates asked Dr. Astley if he could share the document. Dr. Astley said he wasn’t sure how to do so, because it is not a Google doc.

Chair Raftery then read a hard copy of the document, then opened the discussion to the floor for any other excellent examples that kids may not think of, as well as whether the document could be organized and condensed a bit more.

Ms. Kates said that she understood the anonymity piece of the document, but if it’s anonymous, how can a person get the help they need?

Chair Raftery said, “They can name someone. The form goes to counselors. If they name someone, they can have some follow-up.”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “Anything on the confidential reporting form goes to the reporting team. He said it is done on a case-by-case basis. It all depends on the situation. To date, it

has been utilized by recording what individuals say, but we see a wide variety of comments. We even see things like, 'My math teacher gives me too much homework'."

Ms. Kates asked, "How often is the form used? Are they actually using it?"

Mr. Verhoosky said, "It is being used more frequently, as we make students more aware that the form exists. We are trying to make it so it's one click away on website homepage. Now there is increased use. Students have options to say, "Hey, this is who is reporting this, this is who I'm concerned about. But it can be anonymous. Having said all that, we are trying to figure out a better way to use the tool."

Chair Raftery said, "I think it will be great to do it as a QR code."

Mr. Verhoosky said that he was working with Molly [Pistrang-Gomes] of REACH on creating PSA flyers. A lot of kids have experienced trauma, and want to have ownership of their story. We want them to be aware of what's going to happen when they fill out the form. Sometimes, sharing that trauma again for a trauma survivor can do more harm than good to relive it.

To get back to the idea of a QR code, there's a lengthier version but also a simpler version. Here are some options, you can scan the QR code and then you will have different options. For instance, the QR code could take you to a link tree.

Chair Raftery said she wanted some clarity, and wanted to propose a few things. She said that the tool is owned by the high school counselors. So it's not that we have the right over them to tell them what to do, but I suggest that we as a group have been focusing on the reporting tool, and wonder if there is a way to provide some examples if agreed will be helpful guide that we make that suggestion.

Ms. Kates said, "Whatever makes it user-friendly and easy for kids to understand to use is worth suggesting."

Ms. Cerne said, "The average teenager stops reading after two sentences."

Ms. Kates said, "I would prefer to see a drop-down menu, then a student could click for more specifics, so if they want to dig deeper, they can."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "The form is very simple; it is not very confusing. We are continually testing it, bringing it into wellness classes, asking 'Is it catching my eye?' We are also working with town counsel to make sure everything is legally correct. All of that is currently in works."

School Resource Officer Bowles said, "I like the simplicity thing. Is guidance working with us on this? Or are they just going through you, Jason? I would invite Marybeth [Sacramone, WHS director of the guidance department], Allyson [Mizoguchi, WHS principal, Molly [of REACH], and students as well to provide a 10-minute overview."

Chair Raftery asked, "What is the group called? Are you all working together?"

Mr. Verhoosky answered, "The Violence Prevention task force. Another option is if you all want to go to next Violence Prevention meeting."

Chair Raftery said she envisioned two options: We would like them to know we are interested but don't want to muddy waters and step on anyone's toes."

Mr. Verhoosky said, "Whatever the committee here wants, whether to bring them or for us to drop in."

Dr. Astley said, "We have been working on this form for four years. The impetus is linked with Lauren's [Lauren Dunne Astley's] death and Nate's [Nate Fujita's] actions, but it also connects with the [Newtown] Connecticut massacre. We are working on how can we find the potential perpetrators who are suffering terribly, so this is an effort to build the system carefully and do the kind of linkages that several of you have addressed. People saw what was going on but didn't know what it meant and didn't know who to talk to. Each year 15 women are killed in Massachusetts in similar circumstances. In the movie *Escalation*, there is a scene about the peers of the murdered girl, where one of the detectives says, 'They saw what was going on but didn't know what it meant. 'Part of the initiative is to include in the junior year a discussion of relationships, so that our youths do know what the signs of potential violence are, and so that people acquire a common language.

Dr. Astley said, "The list was taken from the guy who killed women at a vocational program in Canada [this refers to the 1989 murder by Marc Lepine of 14 female students and injuring of 10 other women and four men at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, which was the event that led to the formation of the White Ribbon Group]. How can we find this guy to get him help he needs much earlier in life? That's how this list has come to be. It's an issue of our authority, it's hard to pin down who has the authority, but we are the overseers of the mental health operation in this town. Out of pain can come violence. If we identify the pain, we can reduce the violence."

Chair Raftery said, "People are unsure how to report it. You are correct that we should provide more assistance and support to make sure everyone knows about it, and identify behavior issues. I am going to recommend, I would like to see some headwind on this made before the end of the school year. I propose Jason take this list or we all take the list and give feedback to Jason, identify five to 10 of these items that should be on the form. When is the next time the VP taskforce is meeting?"

Chair Raftery said, "I can email tonight. I can put together a list of the top seven items, then he [Jason] brings to the next meeting that the YAC proposes that the existing should be enhanced.

Dr. Astley said, “I would add that there be consideration of the inclusion of the form in the junior year training program. This is a recommendation; we don’t have the authority to impose it. It’s a suggestion, a recommendation.”

Ms. Cerne asked, “What are we basing this on?”

Dr. Astley said, “That is a good question; it should be posed to the group we pass this onto. This is not a scientific research document, but one relying on common sense. That should be stated to people. But in every case I come across, most or nearly all the factors are involved. These are the factors that are operating on a common sense document. But in the meantime, we can do some things to help.”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “I’m happy to take the list and share it with some groups. Knowing that this list has gone before a bunch of mental health professionals, I think a lot of people are looking at it in the same light, i.e., what can we do with this tool? Looking at it also as an educational resource, for VP, RAD, wellness, to raise more awareness of the potential signs of risk.”

He asked the group, “Would you be comfortable with that level of integration vs. the actual screening document? I struggled as an adult professional, I can’t foresee them adopting a tool that is not tested or evidence-based, vs. something we can talk about in a more conceptual manner.”

Chair Raftery asked, “What exists out there?”

Mr. Verhoosky said, “I can’t answer that. If we saw indicators, we would move forward. Things would be put into place at that time. I don’t know if there’s any other evidence-based tools we can use.”

Ms. Kates said, “What Jason said, makes a lot of sense. Just to give students an idea that these are the things that are scary, the things you need to be reporting when you see them or hear them. Educational/informational/discussion people need to hear this over and over again. I have a high schooler, a son in 10th grade, and he’s an angel, but I don’t know he would feel comfortable calling out a friend who was bullying a girl. The more conversation we have with them, the more likely they are to use a tool like this.”

Chair Raftery said, “The question is, who do you reach out to if you know someone who’s in a bad relationship?”

Ms. Kates said, “Once they have this background, as kids leave high school and go off to college, and they don’t have the safety net of their guidance counselor, trusted teacher or parents, they will need these skills.

Chair Raftery said, “I’m sure colleges have reporting tools like this.” She then asked Mr. Verhoosky, “Jason, are you going to next meeting? Maybe this is too simplistic.”

Mr. Verhoosky said, "I can do that, I can reach out to Molly and students working on this."

Chair Raftery suggested that maybe, Molly has a document.

Dr. Astley said, "And the guidance staff."

School Resource Officer Bowles announced he had to leave the meeting to go coach a team.

Dr. Astley said he had not had time to review the minutes from the January meeting.:

Chair Raftery said that at the March meeting the January and February minutes will be reviewed, and that she will look for an alternate date for April. She noted that the in-person meetings were bumped up to a 5 p.m. start, and that would start in March. In May we will go back to virtual, then the June meeting will be at Congregation Or Atid.

Chair Raftery asked if there were any public comment.

Mr. Verhoosky said there was a public comment from Ms. Sherre Greenbaum, who he had met with earlier to discuss the opioid settlement funds.

Ms. Greenbaum said, "I am interested in seeing the opioid settlement funds used to make a difference with not just youth but the whole community. I would love to be involved with it, if there was a task force or a working group. I am deeply committed to this issue, and would like to know if there is any way I can help. It's a community-wide issue."

After Ms. Greenbaum's comment, Chair Raftery said, "I make a motion to adjourn the meeting. Her motion was seconded by Rabbi Polisson. Ms. Cerne, Dr. Astley, Ms. Ross, Rabbi Pollison and Chair Raftery all said, "Aye." The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 pm.