

Minutes
Bedford Youth & Family Services Committee Meeting
March 9, 2023

Attendees:

Heidi Porter, Matt Derman (Chair), Marge Heckman, Josh Smith, Scott Jones, Ann Guay, Susan Schwartz (Clerk), Mallory Fuller

Call to Order:

- Matt opened the meeting at 7:03pm and read the Governor's order enabling the meeting to proceed via Zoom
- Zoom recorded the meeting
- Quorum of committee members present

Public Comment:

- Matt opened and closed public comment, as there were no members of the public in the meeting

YFS Committee Meeting Minutes:

- Draft minutes from the January 12, 2023 YFS Committee Meeting were reviewed and changes were made on pages 1, 2 and 3 at the request of Susan and Matt
- Susan moved to approve the minutes as amended. Marge seconded
- Minutes were approved by a roll call vote - 6:0

Introduction of and Discussion with Mallory Fuller, Youth Services Coordinator:

- Heidi welcomed Mallory to the department as the Youth Services Coordinator and mentioned that Mallory started a few months ago and is focused on those under the age of 18 and their families
- Mallory was in Lowell for 7 years and has experience with Health Services agencies, in home care, shelter case management, career advising, helping opioid users get back into the workforce, working with low income 14-24 year olds, resume workshops and internships
- Mallory indicated that she is happy to be in Bedford and has been very busy meeting with the various groups in town and launching activities. Some of the items she discussed include the following:
 - Working with kids at the Food Bank
 - Launching a new cohort of student volunteers for the Food Bank
 - Meeting with the School Guidance Counselors and ensuring they know how best to work with Jennifer Morazes from Eliot Community Human Services. She noted that there is a wait list for Eliot currently, so she has been also providing residents with other local resources
 - Working with Chris Bang and Cradles to Crayons to acquire winter coats, diapers and wipes
 - Hosting the March 20th Dinner & Discussion, which will be LGBTQ+ Basics & Beyond session with Out Metrowest. 2 people registered today bringing the current registered to 21
 - Scheduling Mental Health First Aid Training, which is targeted for later this Spring
 - Attending Bedford Community Partnership, At Risk, and District Mental Health meetings
 - Processing referrals from Scott Jones
 - Planning to help youth volunteers create resumes that capture their volunteering and job related activities
- Scott asked about the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
 - Heidi explained that it was done in March 2022 and although the schools have not yet

publicly released the data or hosted a community presentation, together the Schools and the Health & Human Services department are being responsive and are acting on the results as they have access to both the regional and Bedford data

- Examples include the Suicide Prevention Dinner & Discussion event, the Mental Health Dinner & Discussion event, and Trusted Adult engagements using Food Bank volunteer and staff interactions
- Heidi noted that there are no surprises in the top 10 highlights; kids have more anxiety
- It was noted that the vendor is available to do a community presentation when Bedford is ready and the timeline is hopefully before the end of the year
- It was noted that the next run of the YRBS will be in 2024
- Mallory will bring up the YRBS at the District Mental Health meeting, which she, Heidi and Chris attend
- The Schools are working a survey with a social and emotional focus
- Ann asked about Mallory's engagement with Hanscom children
 - Mallory indicated that to date, she hasn't worked much with Hanscom children, but has been working with some Hanscom parents
 - Ann suggested that Mallory connect with Sarah McGinley, who is currently the Hanscom Representative to the School Committee and who is anticipated to be Ann's replacement on the School Committee. Sarah can help Mallory engage with the Hanscom children
- Ann suggested the department look to further spread the word about the Interface Referral Service and other mental health and crisis resources
 - Suggestions discussed were – articles in The Bedford Citizen, Facebook postings, etc.
 - Heidi noted that Interface outreach was included in a recent Superintendent Newsletter
 - Heidi mentioned that Health & Human Services recently updated the Mental Health brochure
 - Heidi explained that with the new website items have been reorganized and tagged to enable better search results, especially for those in crisis. Susan noted that the Board of Health also expressed that web searches should be more streamlined for those in crisis and found that most recent searches were much more informative and helpful
 - The committee discussed that the new Community Behavior Health Centers (CBHCs) should be more widely advertised. Heidi to see about potentially doing a mini-webinar on crisis services
 - Susan suggested that potentially consolidating the recent Bedford Citizen articles focused on Chris Bang and the department's services, Mallory Fuller and the department's services and the new brochure with tags onto the website
 - Mallory noted that School Guidance Counselors have asked for resources that they can give to parents. Mallory mentioned that in addition to the Bedford supports she has pointed them to the CBHCs and Psychology Today
 - Ann noted that when people are in crisis, they often don't want to think of it as a mental health concern and there may be a hesitancy to admit it and therefore avoiding it
 - Ann explained that there are programs in schools for kids coming out of hospitalization and it is important for them to know that Mallory is there
 - Heidi noted the potential “mental health” stigma and said that they may look to re-brand their supports and services
 - Heidi mentioned the importance of Mental Health First Aid training and explained that they are working with their collaborative for a presenter and are currently targeting a 6 hour session on May 23 aimed at Town volunteers, board/committee members, staff and potentially community members
 - Heidi noted that it is important that people recognize the signs and symptoms of a mental health condition, like many do for a physical health condition

- Ann noted that Scott Rauch, a Director at McLean Hospital, lives in Bedford and his children go to Bedford schools
- Heidi noted that Mental Health crises happen in Bedford and programming can help drive awareness. She mentioned the following:
 - In our Own Voice presentation done just before COVID by NAMI
 - A past Dinner & Discussion session with Mallory from Minding your Mind, on her experiences
 - In the future, we will look to bring more stories to the community
 - Ann mentioned that she is now on the Board of Directors of the Cole Resource Center (an off shoot from McLean Hospital) and they offer free programs including support groups for parents via Zoom

YFS Department Programming and Activities:

- Food Bank
 - Heidi noted that on average it serves approximately 200 households/week, while in March 2020 it served 40 households/week
 - Grants
 - Looking to the GBFB for a technology grant to help manage client data through tablets and software
 - Looking to the GBFB for an equipment grant to enable the procurement of a temperature controlled food locker where a code could be provided to a client to pick up goods at their convenience when the building is open. This would give greater agency to clients
 - Heidi mentioned that Beverly Bootstraps has one
 - Looking for a state infrastructure grant to enable increased electricity in the Food Bank area to support the equipment. This request is to the organization that ties local growers to the population
 - Space is an ongoing concern and the demand requires greater space
 - Volunteer Coordinator
 - Currently the staff includes Carla and Marie. A recent potential Volunteer Coordinator hire didn't work out
 - This position will be funded by the Pantry and would help to coordinate the many youth volunteers
 - Looking to augment Gaining Ground and have reached out to the Gleaners. Awaiting response, which should come in May
 - Looking to augment GBFB and have reached out to the Merrimack Valley Food Bank. Nutrient dense food is hard to find and it is one of Carla's focuses
 - It was mentioned that volunteering at the Food Bank is a feel good experience for those who help on Thursday and interact with the clients and for those who help on Wednesdays behind the scenes. All in all, it is about community helping community. The volunteers make an impression on the clients and vice versa
- Healthy Bedford
 - Bike Rodeo and Bike Lending are planned to be done again. Last time there was so much interest in the Bike Rodeo that it was held on 2 days
- Chris Bang attended the DVSN Advocate training so he could better understand their process
- Renewed relationship with Cradles to Crayons, which provides winter coats and diapers
- The SNAP COVID supplement just ended
 - Waiting to hear if it is extended with the state funds for another 3 months
- 2 Social Worker interns are helping the department and will be active until their school terms end in the Spring

- Interns hosted a SNAP sign up event
 - Our SNAP applications have a 70% success rate
- Housing
 - RAFT and Town grants to help with funds for first and last months' rent
 - The Devens shelter is slotted to close
 - A Concord hotel will be used for housing the unhoused
 - Residents will be able to leverage the Bedford Food Bank and other Bedford services
 - Concord is part of our Regional Collaborative
- Hanscom
 - Heidi and Julie (Bedford's Public Health Nurse) met with Hanscom's public health team (Lt. Bally) looking to forge a stronger relationship enabling those from Hanscom better access to Bedford's services. This would not only be for the Bases' public health needs, but the 2 base schools too
 - It was mentioned that the focus was on continuity of operations, as often our contacts at Hanscom change. In addition, it was discussed that it would be good to have a Hanscom representative on the YFS Committee, as they had in the past

Committee Member Updates/Open Discussion:

Josh Smith, Recreation Department

- Summer Adventures sign-up opened on February 27 and filled up quickly. There is currently a lengthy wait list
 - Looking for more space at the High School to add more families
 - It is also staffing dependent, so looking to add more Counselors and had a job fair in January
 - Looking to add more Counselors in Training (CITs) too
 - Looking to offer Special Education students activities to supplement their classroom activities
- Spring/Summer Recreation activities sign-up opened on March 6
- Looking to increase middle school programs for youth
- Looking to offer free job interview prep sessions for teenagers
- Springs Brook Park
 - Looking at staff to determine hours
 - Need more lifeguards
- Town Center Playground to be renovated and more accessible
- Financial Aid is available to lower income families for Springs Brook Park and other Recreation programs
- Violence Prevention Coalition Meeting discussed kids outside a lot after school and on half days; what can be done to keep them engaged?
 - Josh mentioned a ping pong program at the middle school
 - Kids like to roam and be outside, so the question is where can they go?
 - Looking at Recreation programs and open space
 - Kids want freedom, not to be watched, and to roam

Scott Jones, Police Department

- Schools are investigating racist graffiti at BHS
 - Looking at Pathways and Restorative Justice
 - Looking to the Schools for details
- June is Gun Violence Prevention month
 - Looking to launch a more robust gun buyback event with the BOH, Health Department and

Middlesex Sheriff's Office

Ann Guay, School Committee

- Budget is done and ready for Town Meeting
- New Superintendent named, which is exciting for him and Bedford. Now preparing for transition
- Later school start times is top of mind
 - Ann has heard that some districts are revisiting later school start times, as kids are still staying up on the internet late at night, so the benefits may not be as great
- Tonight is Ann's last meeting with YFS Committee and it is anticipated that Sarah McGinley will be new to the School Committee and they will need to determine the go forward Representative to this Committee
- The Committee thanked Ann for her service to the Committee and the Town

Susan Schwartz, Board of Health

- Gun Violence Prevention campaign launched with the March 1 Forum with a resident speaker and a MGH speaker. Event was covered by the Bedford Citizen and points people to the Bedford TV recording – recommended for all
- BOH granted a permit to a body art practitioner to expand her laser practice to Body Art, a first for Bedford. Susan noted it is not for kids; clients must be over 18
- The Bedford Citizen had a good article recently about Chris Bang and the town's services and his participation at a BOH meeting
- COVID is still out there, so please continue the mitigation strategies, if you don't feel well – stay home, and test kits are available at the Health Department, COA, Library, and Town Manager's Office

Marge Heckman and Matt Derman, At-Large members

- No further questions or comments

Adjourn:

- Marge moved to adjourn. Susan seconded
- Meeting adjourned at 8:05pm by a roll call vote - 6:0