

**Draft Minutes Bedford Youth & Family Services Committee Meeting
May 11th, 2023 @ 7:00 PM**

Attendees:

Heidi Porter, Matt Derman (Chair), Marge Heckman, Josh Smith (Clerk), Scott Jones, Susan Schwartz, Sarah Sjostrom, Shirley Fan-Chan

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 March 9th, 2023 YFS Committee Meeting were reviewed and changes were made on page 2 for the spelling of Eliot. Vote to approve minutes, Marge then Scott seconded

- Minutes were approved by a roll call vote 8-0

1. YFS Department Updates

Healthy Bedford:

Walk and Roll to School Day May 3, 2023

Continuing to facilitate with partners to make modest improvements to the trail from Lane Parking Lot.

Rodeo Lane/SRTS 3rd grade May 18 & May 19, 2023

Rotary and BPD collaboration on Car Seats – Youth Program Coordinator is working with BPD/BFD to develop programming and access car seats through Rotary donation (\$1500)

Food Bank:

Hired Volunteer Coordinator to start May 11 at 19 hours per week through grant from the Pantry, with plan to use Cummings Grant funding (3 years) if awarded.

Received a grant from GBFB to purchase a tablet for intake at the drive through which will streamline our data collection and reporting.

The Food Bank is now serving about 170-180 households per week – over 110 Drive Thru Distributions weekly, and 55 Home delivery along with about 8-10 pickups during the week. Our pilot grocery card program for about 30 households who are already connected with services through YFS or CoA and were previously on our Home Delivery list is wrapping up May 31 due to cost. Of the families receiving product: Each household receives about 35-40 pounds of groceries totaling close to 6000 pounds (almost THREE TONS) per week. Each week we utilize about 50+ volunteers plus HHS staff to execute the program. Volunteer hours average about 85 or more hours per week. Volunteer shortages continue to be an issue, and we continue to seek and process new volunteers. Currently the Food Bank operates with over 20 vendors to supply the program.

We continue to have Youth from Bedford High School, as coordinated by the Youth Program Coordinator. Currently there is more need than students available, but we will continue to bolster that program as it is critical to our operations.

Adult volunteer program continues to be robust, relying heavily on CERT volunteers to execute the drive thru and some packing. Healthy Bedford Coordinator continues to respond to inquiries, process and train new volunteers weekly.

Due to shortage of supplies and increasing numbers we are purchasing much more volume product than previously. This is in keeping with other program response in the area. The GBFB reports that they anticipate ongoing and increasing limited supplies going forward due to increased demand from their partners and difficulty with staffing. To alleviate the financial stress of purchasing product, HB Coordinator has been researching other partnerships: Merrimack Valley Food Bank, The Boston Area Gleaners (produce during the growing season), and Nevins Farm (pet supplies).

Looking forward, ideally there would be a summer supplemental lunch program, as it is anticipated that free school lunch for all will be discontinued after this school year. Initially conversations with BPS indicate they will not be supporting this program. The food bank service will provide some resources here, but yet to be determined at what level, considering a small weekly supplemental bag, or perhaps 1 large bag at the end of June and one at the beginning of August.

Pantry Assistant Marie Walton has completed 6 months, and a crucial member of the team. Among her many efforts, she enrolled the food bank in the Town composting program. (the formerly hungry goats and chickens are no longer in Bedford)

The HHS office is awaiting word on a grant from The Greater Boston Food Bank: one grant in process for a self-service pick up station, and a grant from Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) to upgrade our electrical capacity and additional equipment.

Community Social Worker:

- Our MSW Intern Jake Hill has completed his internship with YFS. He is moving into his second year at Salem State and will be interning with DCF next year. Our second Intern Christina Cohen will be completing her graduate program and the internship in June. The interns have been very helpful with community outreach for the SNAP program, the Buried in Treasure Group in the COA, and having their own independent caseload of Bedford Community Members.
- We will have a new summer Intern joining us on May 31st who is in the undergraduate Psychology program at Umass Lowell. She will be assisting with larger projects such as helping to administer a Community Mental Health Survey.
- Assisting residents with signing up for the Bedford Rental Relief program. This is a program where residents who are income eligible can receive up to 6 months of payments to supplement their rent. Payment amounts range from \$300 - \$600 a month and are paid directly to the landlord. The program is accepting applications on a rolling basis and will run until all funds are expended.
- Guiding residents with RAFT applications to pay for overdue rent and utility bills. In addition accessing resources for residents with utility bills at risk for shut off either through RAFT, Salvation Army, or ARPA funding.
- Attending annual SNAP community partnership meeting. DTA has plans to roll out additional tools to their dashboard portal in an effort to continue to support partners in signing up community members.
- Collaborating with JDP Clinician to assist Bedford Community Members with chronic mental health conditions. Working with a number of residents over the past few months with housing resources and mental health services. Prepared de-escalation tips for town staff. Will host a training.

Youth Services Coordinator:

- Let's Talk About the "A" word presentation from 4/24 – good turnout of 25 attendees, received a lot of positive feedback that the presentation was informative and people enjoy Jon's "pearls of wisdom" on dealing with clients/family who have frequent panic attacks and how to handle the situation. Link is up until May 10th for the Public
- Met with the school District Leadership team 4/25 & Stephanie Gonthier presented the YRBS data to team. Future plan to present YRBS data to School Committee in the Fall
- Working with the Parents Diversity Council to put together a Pride Month event on Sunday June 11th 1PM-4PM – got approval to move ahead with planning & more information on details to follow. Youth & Family Dept. will be there to provide resources for the community.
- Mental Health First Aid Training Tuesday 5/23 10AM-4PM – 10 participants at this time, room for a total of 30, encourage to sign up if scheduling allows. 2 hours of online pre-work to be completed prior to the 23rd.
- Continuing to connect with the school guidance counselors to provide mental health resources to families and put referrals in for families with Therapist, Jen – Jen is moving along through her waitlist.
- Food Bank continues to be busy, great group of kids volunteering this Spring.

2. Bedford Police Department Updates:

- June is gun violence Prevention month. As part of the Bedford Safe Campaign <https://www.bedfordma.gov/762/Bedford-Safe-Campaign---Gun-Violence-Pre> the Board of Health along with the Police, Health Department and Middlesex Sheriff's Office are hosting a gun buyback event Saturday June 3, 2023 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Bedford Public Works yard located at 314 The Great Road. The focus is on providing residents with a safe and secure way of removing unwanted firearms from their homes. Residents can receive a \$100 gift card for any firearm turned in. Then on Saturday June 10th kids can bring their toy guns to the station and receive a gift card for a kiddie cup at Bedford Farms.
- Police are renewing their Jail Diversion grant with the state Dept of Mental Health (DMH).

3. Board of Health:

- As Scott mentioned, the BOH, Health Department and Police Department are collaborating in the Bedford Safe campaign and the 2 buy back events Scott mentioned are the next activities of the campaign
- Also - although the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency in Massachusetts ends today, COVID is still out there, so please continue to follow the mitigation strategies and if you need Test Kits, they are available at a number of Town Departments including the Health Department, COA, Town Manager's Office and Library
- The Board of Health at its next meeting on May 15 will have a public hearing on revisions to our Tobacco regulation that include items from other communities and the State. With the hearing we have a potential vote.
- In addition, as it is Spring - the Health Department has issued updates on ticks to drive awareness of precautions and the Health Department is doing and preparing for a number of pool and camp inspections.

4. Recreation

- Kids Club Summer Registration opened 5/2/23
- Summer Adventures full with waitlists
 - Only session 1 (which starts July 4th week) has some openings
- Springs Brook Park opens 6/22 (open 6/22-8/12)
 - Brochure sent to residents this week, registration open at bedfordrecreation.org
- Dance recital @ JGMS a success – year long program ending with recital on 5/5/23

Marge Heckman, Matt Derman, Sarah Sjostrom, Shirley Fan-Chan At-Large members

- No further questions or comments

Heidi notes schedule for next school year

- Keeping meetings on the first Thursdays of a given month
- Continuing meetings on zoom

Adjourn

- Marge moved to adjourn. Susan seconded
- Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm by a roll call vote - 8:0

Minutes approved by a roll call vote: 8-0 on September 14, 2023