

Commission for Children and Youth Regular Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 21, 2020

5:30 PM

Virtual Google Meet

Commissioners Present

Shara Kolodney, Chair
Denise Harvey
Hilary Misiano
Michelle Tivey
Knox Watson

Commissioners Absent

Jane Hoeffner
Denese Marshall
Emma Spaulding

Other Attendees

Laura Cleary, Youth Services Director
Allison Lisbon, Social Services Director
Charlene Monn, Program Director
Jasper Richardson, Guest Speaker
Kirk Skodis, Community Member

1. Call to Order

Shara Kolodney called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm.

2. Approval of minutes

Motion: *Move to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting on August 24th, 2020.*

Motion by Denise Harvey, second by Knox Watson (Vote: 4-0-1 (For - Harvey, Kolodney, Misiano, Watson; Abstain: Tivey)).

3. Visiting speaker: Jasper Richardson

Laura Cleary noted that she wanted to find out from Jasper Richardson what he is working on regarding racial justice and social equity. Jasper discussed the protest that he helped organize in Weston in mid-June and how there was a lot of community support. He has spoken with the school district about visiting the lower schools to talk to young students, but COVID has put a hold on that effort. He sees as the main issues:

lack of actual diversity in town, need to address student attitudes; and changes needed in education such as the curriculum regarding slavery and the Holocaust. Laura discussed how Youth Services can help, such as through the ADL event and mini grants and partnering on events. Knox Watson mentioned how the Youth Commission could act as a way to connection people in Town. Shara Kolodney noted that she can share with Jasper the names of people with whom he can discuss changes to the school curriculum and would like to connect him with Will Haskell and Michael Bloom as well as Tony Pesco who is interested in pursuing anti-bias training for BOE. Kirk Skodis noted that it is important not to let issues be swept under the rug during the COVID pandemic. Charlene Monn mentioned young diplomats; teaching cultural differences and building international awareness. Laura Cleary emphasized that we need to think about how best to support Jasper and keep moving forward.

4. Update on TEAM Weston and Walk Against Hate Idea

Shara Kolodney noted that ADL is working on the Walk Against Hate, which will be on 10/18/20. Goal is for each walker to come up with 5 questions for each school level to discuss on the walk. She has reached out to a number of people to make it a town-wide event. A small number of Youth Commission members will plan to get together separately to discuss this event.

Shara reported that TEAM Weston, a 501(c)(3) organization has been formed. Amy Meyerson, the lawyer who did the organizational papers for TEAM Westport, did the documents to set up TEAM Weston.

5. Reports:

- Social Services (Allison): Welcomed a few new families with children. Preparing applications to assist families with heating their homes. Trying to figure out how holiday programs will work this year.
- WOW fall update (Charlene): Started today. Doing all classes online through zoom. Offered 27 for the fall; right now have 10 that are running. May reintroduce programs later in the session.
- WYS update (Laura): Movie occurring at Lachat soon as part of a welcome for new families (thus far 30 families have signed up). Youth Services and Parks and Recreation are sharing the cost. Allison and Laura are talking with Westport about having a shared crisis team with local clinicians. The JRB has its first new case in 7 months.
- Student updates (Knox): Consensus is that the WHS National Honor Society doesn't have the time to do a full mentorship program. Student government is doing a video program, which involves reading books to younger kids.

Charlene suggested reaching out to the HES and WIS librarians and the children's book librarian at the Weston Public Library for book ideas. The awards program for volunteer hours is continuing. Discussion ensued regarding other possibilities for high school students mentoring lower school students.

- School/community liaisons as needed: no report.

6. Other Member Updates

Hilary Misiano noted that she does mindfulness sessions. Laura raised the possibility of doing them for teens.

7. New ideas/discussion

No further items to discuss.

8. For the good of the order

No further items to discuss.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 pm. Motion by Hilary Misiano. Second by Knox Watson. Vote 5-0-0 (For: Harvey, Kolodney, Misiano, Tivey, Watson).

Respectfully submitted,
Denise Harvey, Secretary