



## Meeting Minutes for Advisory Board Meeting – September 18, 2023

**Attendance:** Katy Colthart, Mary Ellen LaRose, Adina Swan, Shea Lonergan, Gioia Cianciarulo, Arielle Boloker, Jan Midiri, Christy McKenney, Meaghan Grealley, Ella Xu, Dori Parmelee, Brad Pindel, Issac Chan, Andrew Alex, John Loughnane, Mary-Carol Waters, Diana Martucci, Joe Previtera

**I. Call to Order:** The meeting convened at Wentworth Hall at 7:05 p.m.

**II. Introduction of New Board Members and WY&FS Staff Members:** Introductions were made and Arielle Boloker, one of the graduate interns for the year was welcomed to the staff.

**III. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:** A motion was made by Brad Pindel to accept the 6/12/23 minutes. Gioia Cianciarulo seconded the motion. All were in favor of approving the meeting minutes.

### **IV. Department Report:**

#### **Administrative Updates**

*In August*, Mary Ellen LaRose celebrated her 9<sup>th</sup> year anniversary working for the Town of Westwood. In addition, we said goodbye to our graduate interns Abby McGinn and Christa Perry who stayed on through the summer with the help of ARPA funding.

*This month*, Katy Colthart and Shea Staffa-Lonergan also celebrated anniversaries working for the town. Katy has worked for 2 years and Shea for 1.

We also welcomed 2 new graduate clinical interns, Arielle Boloker from Simmons School of Social Work and Mark Lussier from Boston College School of Social Work. Both Arielle and Mark are in their final year in school and will be with us for approximately 24 hours per week from September through May.

#### **Clinical Services**

There are currently **42 counseling clients** on the WY&FS caseload, 39 individual clients, and 3 ongoing parent consultations. (*This is the highest number of clients served in September in the past five years*)

There were **4 new intakes** for counseling services in July and August. There have been **4 new intakes** for counseling services so far in September.

There are currently **18 individuals or families on our “waitlist” for counseling services**. Whenever there is a waitlist, we try to provide immediate strategies or resources and share the William James INTERFACE Referral Service information as another option for residents/students. As always, referrals are triaged so that those residents in most immediate need are prioritized.

We were busy marketing and registering participants for our in-person groups this fall. As of this writing, all 3 after-school groups are full. **Calm & Cope (our anxiety coping skills group)** is running on Wednesdays (2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grade) and Thursdays (4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade) and this fall, with a maximum of 8 participants in each group for a **total of 16 participants**. On Tuesday afternoons we are holding a **K/1<sup>st</sup> Social Smarts Group (fka Structured Play Group)** social skills group, also with the maximum of **8 participants**.

In addition to our after-school groups, we are running 2 in-school groups. We are partnering with the Hanlon School to run a **2<sup>nd</sup> grade Calm and Cope** and we are running a **K/1 Social Smarts** group at Sheehan. All groups will start the week of October 9<sup>th</sup>.

We are thrilled to offer another **Yoga Flow for Middle Schoolers** this year. We will be hosting a free 6-week program at the main library starting November 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **Program Updates**

We're happy to report that we are actively promoting and registering for our high school Mentoring Programs. Applications are currently being accepted for the following programs:

- **Body Safety Theater**
- **BeSMARRT**
- **Friends Network**
- **Teen Scene @ the Library**

So far, we've had a total of ~**70 high school students** interested in being **Mentors** in one or more of these programs.

Thank you to Mary Ellen for getting out the word through a mailing to all WHS students, and marketing in the Westwood Wire, and on social media! Thanks, too, to Shea, Adina, Mark, and Arielle for staffing informational "Mentor" tables outside the WHS Cafeteria in early September.

**Westwood Writes**, the intergenerational pen pal program has become very popular this year. We have had **28 students** apply to the program this year! Adina has made great strides in creating partnerships with staff at the Library, COA, and Recreation in an effort to reach out to as many senior citizens to make this program as robust as it can be.

We are actively recruiting donations for our **Birthday Giving Program**. Mary Ellen has reached out to former **Holiday Giving Program** sponsors encouraging them to donate to our Birthday Giving Program as supplies and gift cards are dwindling. To streamline this program, Mary Ellen has set up an Amazon Wishlist to make donating easy.

### **Community Connections**

Y&FS staff is participating in the following local groups, boards, and committees this fiscal year:

- |                                |                                     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| -Community Chest               | -Community Crisis Intervention Team |
| -Deerfield Site Council        | -Early Childhood Council            |
| -Human Services Function Group | -BIDMC-Needham Community Meeting    |
| -MMA Women Leading Government  | -BIDMC-Needham CBAC                 |
| -WHS Child Study Team          | -Regional Youth Commission Meetings |
| -Westwood Cares                | -WHS Site Council                   |
| -WHS Legislative Council       | -WPS Incident Management Team       |
| -WPS Wellness Review Committee |                                     |

### **IV. Old Business:**

**Summer Group Programming:** Katy, Adina and Shea shared that the department has received positive feedback about the Parent/Caregiver and Child Group that ran side by side this summer. Adina and Haley, a WY&FS graduate intern ran the parent portion which provided strategies that parents/caregivers could implement and reinforce at home with their child regarding emotion regulation and coping skills. The incoming 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders met with Shea and explored naming feelings as well as learning coping/emotion regulation strategies. Katy noted it was powerful that the kids understood that this was something that both they and their parents/caregivers were working on this topic together. Mary-Carol asked why the pilot group was focused on this age group. Adina noted that this age group makes up a large part of the department's waitlist at the end of last school year.

## V. New Business

**CORI paperwork reminder:** Mary Ellen gave an overview of the CORI process and asked board members to complete and return their forms promptly.

**Advisory Board Vote on Slate of Officers:** Nominations were made and a vote was taken on a new incoming chair and vice-chair for the board. Mary-Carol will serve as chair and Diana Martucci will serve as Vice-Chair.

**Program Spotlight: Fall Group Programming:** Shea shared that two sessions of Social Smarts formerly known as Structured Playgroup will run this fall. The new name is more reflective of the group's focus on skill development rather than play. A session for incoming K and 1<sup>st</sup> graders will be held at Wentworth Hall and another session will be run in partnership with Sheehan during the school day. The department will also be running two sessions of Calm and Cope: Anxiety Coping Group at Wentworth Hall. One for 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> graders and another for 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> graders. An additional session of the group will be held at Hanlon Elementary during the school day this fall.

### Community Liaisons:

**Westwood Police:** Brad spoke about the incoming School Resource Officer, Jeremy Lenzo, who will begin his role later this school year. Brad mentioned that he has been visiting schools teaching students about bus safety.

### Schools Update:

**Westwood High School:** Meaghan and Alex talked about traffic safety concerns at the high school. Isaac and Ella spoke about bus delays due to the later start and shared information on new WHS attendance policies. Board members spoke about how the later start time is impacting various groups including town youth sport practice and game times.

**Thurston Middle School:** Christy noted that the change in start times is actually making arrival and dismissal smoother at Thurston. Diana and Dori spoke an upcoming Fun Friday event for middle schoolers and a possible need for chaperones. Katy offered to share volunteer opportunities with current WY&FS mentors.

**Elementary Schools:** Gioia mentioned a new approach to curriculum night at the elementary level. Parents/Caregivers and students will be invited to attend together.

**Open Discussion of Potential Community Needs:** Dori Parmelee spoke about the challenges Extended Day is experiencing around space for programming and increased interest in families hoping to enroll their children.

VI. **Public Comment:** Joe Previtera thanked the board for welcoming him and expressed how enlightening it was to see the work of the department as a new Select Board Member.

VII. **Adjournment** - The meeting was called to adjournment at 8:08 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ellen LaRose