



## Meeting Minutes for Advisory Board Meeting – October 23, 2023

**Attendance:** Katy Colthart, Mary Ellen LaRose, Gioia Cianciarulo, Jan Midiri, Meaghan Greally, Ella Xu, Dori Parmelee, Brad Pindel, Issac Chan, Andrew Alex, John Loughnane, Mary-Carol Waters, Diana Martucci, Ethan Walsh, Lucy Parks, Nyla Bacchus, Meaghan Greally

**I. Call to Order:** The meeting convened at Wentworth Hall at 7:08 p.m.

**II. Welcome New Board Member** –Katy announced that Select Board unanimously appointed Dori Parmelee to the board. Dori was welcomed to the board by fellow board members.

**III. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:** A motion was made by David to accept the 9/18/23 minutes. Diana seconded the motion. All were in favor of approving the meeting minutes.

### IV. Department Report

#### Administrative Updates

We have welcomed back Sarah Spinello (Westwood resident, and consultant in years past) as a consultant/group facilitator this year. She will be helping with programming and running some of our elementary-aged groups.

We recently extended an offer, and she accepted, to Erin McSherry, LICSW to fill a temporary part-time ARPA-funded position. We hope to start her onboarding process the week of October 30th.

#### Clinical Services

There are currently **43 counseling clients** on the WY&FS caseload, 37 individual clients; 1 family client; 5 parent consultations.

There were **3 new intakes** for counseling services since our last report in September and we anticipate more referrals as school progress reports are going out.

There are currently **8 individuals or families on our “waitlist” for counseling services (compared to 30 waiting at this time last year)** Whenever there is a waitlist, we also share the William James INTERFACE Referral Service information as another option for residents and offer a one-time meeting with a Y&FS clinician so that families might have some initial resources while waiting. As always, referrals are triaged so that those residents in the most immediate need are prioritized.

Our group programs are starting the week of October 9th. **Calm & Cope (our anxiety coping skills group)** is running on Wednesdays (2nd/3rd grade) and Thursdays (4th/5th grade) this fall. We are holding a **K/1st Social Smarts (fka SPG) group on Tuesdays**. All groups have a maximum capacity of 8 group members. In addition, we are **running Social Smarts at Sheehan and Calm & Cope at Hanlon** during the day. We will be planning our next round of groups later this week. An update will be given at the Board Meeting.

## **Program Updates**

We're happy to report that our **Mentor programs** are up and running. We had a total of **121 high school students apply** this year to our programs.

### **-Be SMARRT (Students Modeling and Advocating for Respectful Relationships @ Thurston**

We currently have **15 mentors** (up from 10 last year) in the program. Auditions were held last week and roles will be assigned at the next meeting. We continue to work with Thurston administration to make appropriate changes to the skits and content for classroom discussions. *Thank you to Shea and Mark for overseeing this program.*

### **-Friends Network**

We had 40 students apply for this program. We have finished Big Friend interviews and have **accepted 25 and have waitlisted 8** as of this writing. We are in the process of recruiting a few more Littles and **hope to have 32 pairs** of students meeting weekly. The Big training is scheduled for October 26th and the program begins on November 2nd. *Adina and Arielle are doing a fabulous job organizing all these moving parts.*

### **Teen Scene @ the Library is up and running.**

We have 15 mentors helping at the library on half-day Wednesdays and Friday afternoons this season, while 13 are available so far for the winter season. We are still accepting applications from anyone interested in helping in the winter and spring. *Thanks again to Adina for collaborating with Felicia, the teen librarian, on this program.* We will be marketing later this fall for our Body Safety Theater program which will start in February 2024 as well as Teen Scene.

**Westwood Writes**, the intergenerational pen pal program, that we piloted during the pandemic in partnership with the COA, has **30 students** this year (up from 19 last year)! In addition, to the COA we are eager to collaborate with all Human Service divisions to recruit more senior residents who could benefit from the program. Thank you to Lina at the COA, and Claire and Karen from both library branches for helping us expand this program.

**Holiday Giving** is in full swing and Mary Ellen is doing a fabulous job coordinating this effort. Emails for donors and recipients have gone out and referrals are coming in. We continue to collaborate with WPS to be inclusive of students in the Metco program and are getting the word out to Westwood residents and WPS students.

**Yoga Flow for Middle Schoolers** is happening again this fall. Ellen O'Hara, Certified Yoga Instructor and Certified Trauma-Informed Yoga Instructor will facilitate this program. We piloted this program last year and are excited to have Ellen back this year. The program is limited to 12 participants and we have 9 participants as of this writing. Mary Ellen will speak more about this program during the program focus portion of our meeting.

Katy continues to reach out/meet with community partners to explore how the department can better service the community. Recent meetings included Tim Piwovar, WPS superintendent, Amy Davenport, WHS principal, and Jared Orsini, Westwood Health director.

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 -BIDMC-Needham CBAC**

**-MMA Women Leading Government**

**-WHS Child Study Team -Regional Youth Commission Meetings -Westwood Cares -WHS Site Council -WHS Legislative Council -WPS Incident Management Team -WPS Wellness Committee**

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

**CORI Paperwork Reminder:** Mary Ellen thanked board members for promptly completing the CORI paperwork for submission to the Town's Human Resources Department.

#### **V. New Business**

**Staffing Update:** Katy shared that the clinical staff continues to work on reducing the number of children and families on the waitlist. She was excited to report that significant progress has been made and the waitlist is at its lowest level in the past few years.

**Program Spotlight: Yoga Flow for Middle Schoolers:** Mary Ellen shared that the department will again be offering a six-week yoga flow session at the main branch of the library. Ellen O'Hara, a local resident and certified yoga instructor will lead the session. Beyond yoga flow she will also introduce the participants to the practice of guided meditation. The class is at capacity and there is a waitlist.

#### **Community Liaisons:**

**Westwood Police:** Brad mentioned that he recently spoke to students in the Crime in America class at WHS about the workings and structure of the Westwood PD. A board member asked a question about MedFlight locations in town. Brad reported that Sheehan and Morrison Field are the two locations currently in town.

**Westwood Food Pantry:** Mary Ellen shared that the pantry shelves are quite low but she is anticipating a few large food drives in November will bring in many needed donations.

**Early Childhood Council:** Katy shared that the department met with Early Childhood and the Library Staff to plan for possible collaborations later this school year.

#### **Schools Update:**

**Westwood High School:** Isaac talked about issues with late arrival of buses and Andrew mentioned traffic concerns in the morning. Lucy spoke about how many seniors are working on their college applications and that the Key Club is planning a food drive this November for the Westwood Food Pantry. Nyla talked about how the Club Fair brought in increased interest from freshman than in years past. Ethan spoke about the Anne Frank traveling exhibit at the high school. Katy mentioned that the department will have staff and a resource table outside the exhibit next week. Ethan mentioned that rehearsals for Game of Tiaras, the fall play are underway.

**Thurston Middle School:** Diana shared that Thurston conferences this year will again be student led. The new model has been well received. Ethan mentioned the middle school play will be Bippity, Boppity, Baam. Performances will take place in early November.

**Elementary Schools:** Dori mentioned the school committee and superintendent are beginning work on a needs study to make a long-term plan for improvements to school buildings. She reported that the Pine Hill School is slated to open in February. There was discussion regarding upcoming Halloween events at the elementary level.

**Open Discussion of Potential Community Needs:** Mary Carol inquired about data on how many residents are taking advantage of the William James Interface Referral Service. Katy will share this information at a future meeting.

Katy shared that the town was recently notified that the State will be placing some families at the Budget Inn as part of the emergency shelter program. The town and the school department will work together to serve and welcome these families as they arrive. John talked about ten years ago when families were living at the Budget Inn as part of the Transitional Assistance Program; the town/school departments and many residents came together and supported these families.

VI. **Public Comment:** none

VII. **Adjournment** - The meeting was called to adjournment at 8:11p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ellen LaRose