



Meeting Minutes for Advisory Board Meeting – May 23, 2022

Attendance: Danielle Sutton, Mary Ellen LaRose, Katy Colthart, Daniel Tryder, Jan Midiri, Jeremy Stern, John Loughnane, Brian Cole, Diana Martucci, Nicola Midiri, Christy McKenney, Julia Ritzenberg, Mary Carol Waters, Brad Pindel, Eli Wasserman, Trish Tucke, Gioia Cianciarulo, Paul Marino, David Russell

I. **Call to Order:** The meeting convened via Zoom Webinar and was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

II. **Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:** A motion was made by John Loughnane to accept the 3/28/22 minutes. Mary Carol seconded the motion. All were in favor of approving the January meeting minutes.

III. Director's Report:

Clinical Services

*There are currently **43 counseling clients** on the WY&FS caseload, 35 individual clients; 1 family client; 7 parent consultations. (*This total is compared to 48 at our last meeting in March; 57 in May of 2021; ~38 in May of 2020 and 55 in May of 2019*).

*There have been **4 new intakes for counseling services so far in May** (*compare to 3 intakes in May 2021; x intakes in May 2020; 5 in May 2019*)

-There was only **1 new intake for counseling services in April** (*compare to 2 intakes in April 2021; x intakes in April 2020; 2 in April 2019*)

-There were **7 new intakes for counseling services in March** (*compare to 4 intakes in March 2021; 4 intakes in March 2020; 8 in March 2019*).

-There were **13 new intakes for counseling services in February** (*compare to 4 intakes in February 2021; 8 intakes in February 2020; 6 in February 2019*)

-There were **5 new intakes for counseling services in January** (*compare to 2 intakes in January 2021; 5 intakes in January 2020; 7 in January 2019*).

-There were **6 new intakes for counseling services in December** (*compare to 5 intakes in December 2020; 5 in December 2019; 4 in December 2018*).

-There were **8 new intakes for counseling services in November** (*compare to 5 intakes in November 2020; 8 in November 2019; 9 in November 2018*).

-There were **12 new intakes for counseling services in October** (*compare to 7 intakes in October 2020; 5 in October 2019; and 9 in October 2018*).

-There were **7 new intakes for counseling services in September** (*compare to 5 intakes in September 2020; 6 in September 2019; and 6 in September 2018*).

*There are currently **36 individuals or families on our “waitlist” for counseling services** (*This is compared to 36 at our last meeting in March; 11 in May of 2021; zero in May 2020, 4 in May 2019*). Of the individuals waitlisted, only **seven are in middle or high school**. 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 most immediate need are prioritized. **Thanks to Katy and our Graduate Intern, Liz, we also developed and offered a new group program this spring, “Tackling our Troubles”, to address the needs of a number of children on the waitlist.**

*In the first week of March we began our third and final round of groups, a twelve-week 4th-6th grade **Girls Group** that will be ending next week on May 24th, as well as an eight-week 2nd/3rd grade **Structured Play Group** and a six-week 2nd/3rd grade **Calm & Cope** anxiety coping skills group, both of which ended at the end of April. There were a total of **23 participants** across these three groups. Katy will also discuss a new group that she created for elementary school-aged residents, **Tackling our Troubles**, which is currently serving **8 children**.

Program Updates

***Body Safety Theater** performances took place for all of the third-grade students in the WPS elementary schools on **Wednesday, May 18th and Thursday, May 19th**. Thank you to the Mentors who volunteered for BST this year, after a two-year hiatus during the pandemic, and to Emily Greco for all of her coordination and leadership of the program! The program has been up and running since the beginning of February, with weekly rehearsals for the Mentors and Emily working with the high school and elementary school principals to coordinate not only the two days of in-person performance, but also **two Parent Information Sessions on May 3rd and May 4th** and her pre-performance and post-performance visits to every third-grade classroom. In addition to the full program for third grade students, all parents/guardians of 4th and 5th grade students in the district will receive the same information and a video of the BST performance should they wish to show it to their children at home.

*The **Friends Network** program wrapped up in April, marking its first full year of in-person meetings for Big Friends and Little Friends since before the COVID pandemic. There were **twenty-four (24) 1:1 pairs** of high school students and 3rd, 4th and 5th grade residents across two different weekly Thursday sessions. Thanks to Katy for managing this successful year of Friends Network, and to our Graduate Interns, Julianne and Liz, for their help in co-leading.

***Teen Scene @ the Library**, which sees the Teen Librarian at the main library coordinating volunteer shifts for high school **Mentors on early release Wednesday and on Friday afternoons** when large numbers of TMS students visit the library after school, has also wrapped up for the year. We look forward to partnering with the Library again next school year for this fun and flexible volunteer offering.

***Westwood Writes** has had **19 student/senior pairs** exchanging letters each month since the fall. The second year of this collaborative program with the Westwood Council on Aging will come to a close shortly, resuming in the fall for its third year.

Community Connections

*In April, WY&FS was awarded a **large, multi-year grant from Beth Israel Deaconess-Needham** to be put towards the increasing cost of the William James College INTERFACE Referral Service. In the department’s grant application, we were able to show how well the service has been utilized by Westwood residents and how important it is to the community as a free mental health resource for all. The award is for the maximum amount of \$18,000 over the next three years, or \$6,000 per year. We are grateful to BID-Needham for their support!

* In April and May, WY&FS was happy to be represented on the **interview panels** for two new positions in the Town, the Assistant Fire Chief position and the Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director role. The latter comes with the impending leave of current HR Director, and former Y&FS Advisory Board member,

Joan Courtney-Murray, who is expecting to step into the new role of “full-time grandmother” in the summer.
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IV. Old Business

Staffing Needs Update: Danielle thanked Jan Midiri and Mary Carol Waters for their participation in the final interview for our new Youth Services Counselor hire. She noted it was so nice to be able to have input from members of the Advisory Board’s Executive Committee as we made our decision. The department will be welcoming Adina Swan, LMHC to the Y&FS staff in early June!

New Student Board Member Update: Mary Ellen thanked Brad Pindel, Brian Cole and Daniel Tryder for their participation on the Nominating Committee for new Student Board Members in April. We had a great group of applicants, and are looking forward to the new students officially joining the Advisory Board in September!

V. New Business:

Tackling Our Troubles Group: Katy updated the board on a new pilot group that will run this Spring. This six-week offering for 3rd-5th graders will focus on identifying and expressing feelings in healthy ways, managing big emotions and building confidence. Katy will run this program with our graduate interns.

BID Needham Grant for WJC INTERFACE Referral Service: Danielle announced that in April, WY&FS was awarded a large, multi-year grant from Beth Israel Deaconess-Needham to be put towards the increasing cost of the William James College INTERFACE Referral Service. The award is for the maximum amount of \$18,000 over the next three years, or \$6,000 per year. Danielle thanked Katy for her work on this grant.

Recognize A Youth Award: Mary Ellen shared that the RAY Award Ceremony will take place on June 13th at the main branch of the library. The Rotary Club chose Timmy Donovan, Yvette Easton, Sophia Routhier, Jack Stuehler and Ali Tariq as this year’s recipients.

Community Liaisons:

Community Chest: Danielle shared that WCC is currently accepting applications for financial awards for local summer camps. Residents in need of financial support to pay for summer camp have until May 19th to apply. A family can apply for a financial award to assist with basic expenses at the same time as a campership. Danielle also shared that WCC will again be funding a week of “Family Camp” at Hale for two families that our department identifies. Mary Ellen is working to find two interested families.

Human Rights Task Force: Danielle mentioned that along with co-chair Melinda Garfield of Westwood Media Center she is involved with a podcast that interviews members of the taskforce and other key players. The group is moving forward planning for a possible town equity audit and researching potential trainings around DEI for staff.

Early Childhood Council: Danielle talked about the Baby Kneads program for babies from birth to six months. The program is currently running in Walpole and is a collaboration with multiple towns.

Food Pantry: Trish mentioned that the annual Eddie Thomson Food Drive will run during the month of April.

Police Department: Brad gave an update on the Explorers program. The DARE Program for 5th graders is wrapping up for the school year.

Schools Update:

Westwood High School: Brian gave an update on spring sports. The seniors last day is this week and graduation is next week. Paul noted this is the largest graduating class to pass through WHS. Jeremy spoke about J-Term and the National Honor Society Induction Ceremony.

Thurston Middle School: Christy shared information on upcoming field trips. She happily announced that Thurston has recently hired for a Dean of Students position for next school year.

Elementary: Gioia mentioned that Sheehan recently wrapped their annual musical, Wizard of OZ. MCAS has completed for the year. 5th graders in the district will be visiting Hale soon to get to know to each other as they transition to Hale.

Community Updates: David shared that information on a Jimmy Fund Yard Sale that his family and other residents run each year in the spring.

Danielle mentioned that the Westwood Recreation Department has a shortage of lifeguards for the summer and is offering to pay for lifeguard training as an incentive to encourage people to apply.

VI. **Public Comment:** none

VII. **Adjournment** - The meeting was called to adjournment at 8:01 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ellen LaRose