



## Meeting Minutes for Advisory Board Meeting – March 22, 2021

**Attendance:** John Loughnane, Danielle Sutton, Mary Ellen LaRose, Paul Marino, Eli Wasserman, Brian Cole, Melissa DePina, David Russell, Ethan Blonder, Trish Tucke, Brad Pindel, Janica Midiri, Maeve Hutton, Diana Martucci

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

II. **Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:** A motion was made by David and seconded Brad by to accept the 3/22/21 minutes. All were in favor of approving the minutes.

### III. Director's Report:

*Big staffing news as our Clinical Coordinator, Sarah Baroud, has given notice that she will be leaving the department at the end of June to pursue work on her own private practice. Sarah has been with Y&FS for nearly seven years, first as a Youth Services Counselor and later in the newly developed Clinical Coordinator position. She also served as Interim Director for both of the Director's maternity leaves, working closely with the Advisory Board during those months. We wish Sarah all the best in her future pursuits!*

*Big board news in that Christy (Harrison) McKenney is expecting her first child in October 2021! We're so happy for you, Christy, and look forward to meeting your little one next year!*

### Clinical Services

\*There are currently **57 counseling clients** on the WY&FS caseload, 48 individual clients; 0 family clients; 9 parent consultations. (*This total is compared to 54 at our last meeting in March; ~40 in May of 2020; 55 in May of 2019; and 54 in May of 2018*).

\*There have been **5 new intakes** for counseling services so far in April (2) and May (3) (*compare to 4 intakes in March; X intakes in May 2020; 5 in May 2019; 4 in May 2018*). There are currently **11 individuals or families on our "waitlist"** for counseling services, (*compared to 8 in March; zero in May 2020; 4 in May of 2019; and 7 in May of 2018*). Whenever there is a waitlist, we also share the William James INTERFACE Referral Service information as another option for those who do not have barriers to seeking private counseling through their insurance, and also 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.

\*Our first round of six-week **virtual anxiety coping groups for 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> graders and 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders, titled, *Calm & Cope***, began on March 30<sup>th</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup> and wrapped up on May 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> with a total of 25 participants. Given the waitlists that we saw for both groups, we promoted and have already begun a **second round** of *Calm & Cope* groups for the same ages that began last week on May 18<sup>th</sup> and May 20<sup>th</sup>! The 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> group has 15 participants and three people on the waitlist and the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade group has 13 participants with no waitlist. We plan to run this program as a regular group offering next year! A big thanks to Sarah and Emily for their work on this program!

### Program Updates

\*In recognition of **Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week (first week of May) and Mental Health Awareness month in May**, Y&FS partnered with the Westwood Early Childhood Department and Westwood Public Library to put on three **StoryWalks** around town (Sen Ki, University Station and Hale Reservation) that highlight mindfulness, breathing and calming practices for young children and their caregivers. A really cool offering to the community that was made possible by Mary Ellen, and great collaboration with our partners in Early Childhood and Library!

\*The **Birthday Giving** pilot program is going well with over twenty current recipients registered! In addition to the monetary and gift card donations from local donors, we’ve also had dozens of “birthday in a bag” donations so that we have enough to give one to every recipient and still have some for new recipients as they register going forward. Thank you to Mary Ellen who coordinated and is carrying out all aspects of this great program!

\***Westwood Writes: An Intergenerational Pen Pal Program** is wrapping up its pilot year this month. Twenty pen pal pairs exchanged letters through the program this year, and we look forward to continuing in the 2021-2022 academic year with *Westwood Writes* as a permanent offering in our volunteer programs for high school students.

\*Emily has wrapped up the **Bullying Prevention Theater script rewrites** that were conducted virtually with a group of Mentors from the BPT program. Next steps are to have the Y&FS staff review the proposed changes, then to share with our partners at the Thurston Middle School before officially revising the script.

### **Community Connections**

\*On Monday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, Danielle was happy to represent the department in attending the WPS virtual event, **“Code-Switching: Race and Identity in the Westwood METCO Program”**. In a letter from WHS Principal, Amy Davenport, the event was described as *“an evening of reflection and discussion as we watch the film Code-Switching and hear from a panel of Westwood METCO students, educators and alumni sharing their experiences with the METCO program. This evening will be dedicated to hearing from our community as we aim to support and more fully integrate Boston students into our suburban school system.”* There were more than eighty people in attendance.

\*On Sunday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> and Monday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Emily and Danielle attended a two-day workshop by Eli Lebowitz of the Yale Child Study department where we were trained on the implementation of a new evidence-based treatment for childhood anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder, **SPACE (Supportive Parenting for Anxious Childhood Emotions)**. Anxiety has been the number one presenting issue in our department for the last several years, so we are always looking for innovative ways to treat anxiety and we’re excited to bring these skills into our work with Westwood families.

\*Regular weekly construction meetings continue for the **Wentworth Hall Redevelopment Project**. Each Tuesday, WY&FS joins other stakeholders at these virtual meetings to learn about and discuss ongoing aspects of the project construction. On May 11<sup>th</sup>, Y&FS staff were invited back into the space to see the paint colors up on the office walls and to take measurements for the purposes of furniture planning and ordering. We were able to invite the Early Childhood department, consisting of Director, Janet Lucey and Administrative Assistant, Tarynne Steenkamp, so that they might also see and plan for the office space that they will be occupying in the Y&FS suite.

\*The Y&FS staff has been working a hybrid schedule of remote days and office days since our **temporary space in the lower level of Town Hall** was able to be occupied at the end of March. This space in Town Hall will be our “home base” until we are settled in our permanent office space in the newly designed addition on Wentworth Hall in summer of 2021.

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

**Birthday Giving Pilot Program:** Mary Ellen updated the group on how the first few months of program are going and mentioned the recent donation of birthday parties in a box. She thanked St. Denis Faith Formation Classes and Thurston sixth graders for their donations.

**Anxiety Coping Group:** Danielle shared that the first two sessions of the online program for 2nd-5th graders are wrapping up this week. Once the department launched this offering, a wait list quickly developed and it was decided to offer a second session of the six-week program. The late spring program will end in late June and the department plans to offer this program in person this fall. We anticipated this would be a popular program based on results from the parent survey. Danielle thanked Sarah and Emily for their work in bringing this program to life.

**StoryWalk Update:** Danielle noted this program also came to be as a result of data from the parent survey.

**New Student Board Member Decisions:** Mary Ellen thanked the board members that participated in the interviews for new student board members. The committee selected four sophomores to join the board in the fall. The new members, Nicola Midiri, Julia Ritzenberg, Jeremy Stern and Daniel Tryder will be invited to observe and be introduced at the June board meeting.

#### V. New Business:

**Wentworth Hall Update:** Danielle mentioned that the project is still on target to be completed this summer. Staff took a recent tour and were able to get a real sense of the space now that walls are up and paint is on the walls.

**Clinical Coordinator Opening:** Danielle thanked the Human Resources Department for quickly posting the opening and scheduling interviews of candidates. Initial screening interviews will take place the first week of June.

**Board Member Chair and Vice Chair Nominations:** John gave an overview on how the nomination process works for chair and vice-chair. The chair and vice-chair serve for two years. The vice chair is typically in line to become chair if nominated and voted on by the board. Jan is currently the vice chair and is interested in being nominated for a term as board chair. Mary Carol has expressed interest in being nominated for vice chair. John presented Jan and Mary Carol as the slate of candidates to be nominated by the board. David made a motion to vote on this slate and Trish seconded the motion. The board took a vote on the slate of nominations and all were in favor. John noted that at the June meeting a vote will take place to approve the now officially nominated slate of officers.

#### VI. Community Liaisons:

**Community Chest:** Danielle spoke about the WCC campership program, including a new partnership with Hale Reservation. Hale will donate two Hale Family Camp camperships to two Westwood families with financial need. WCC has asked for the department's help in identifying families that may be interested.

**Early Childhood Council:** Danielle mentioned the Council has officially changed over the Little Free Libraries in town to Little Free Diverse Libraries. The new children's book selections celebrate diversity. The library organized a group of students to create designs to reflect the new theme.

**Food Pantry:** Trish spoke about a new pilot program that brings fresh produce once a month free of charge to pantry clients. Johnny's Fresh, a local restaurant supply company delivers the boxes to client's homes. The pantry is covering the cost.

**Police Department:** Brad noted the recent retirement of Officer Timothy Foley after 32 years of service. He also mentioned the department received a “Click It or Ticket”, federal grant. The grant’s purpose will be to encourage drivers and their passengers to wear seatbelts.

**Westwood Cares** - Danielle mentioned the department hopes to have enough staffing this fall to direct attention to planning and future Westwood Cares events.

#### **Schools Update:**

**Westwood High School:** Danielle mentioned a webinar event hosted by the METCO program at the high school. Participants watched the film *Code-Switching* and then listened to a panel of Westwood METCO students, educators, and alumni sharing their experiences with the METCO program. Over 86 people participated. She noted this is just the first event with more to come; as the community aims to create a more welcoming and inclusive community, particularly for Boston resident students.

Ethan spoke about a recent assembly for seniors in response to an image with racist iconography that was posted online. Seniors in small groups were invited to share their thoughts, personal experiences and ideas for moving forward as a class.

Eli talked about upcoming AP exams and MCAS testing. John noted the spring musical, *Urinetown* will be performed on Flahive Field this year in June and he mentioned the planning going on for the “All Night Graduation Party” for seniors.

**Thurston Middle School:** Diana reported that the school is planning events to celebrate the 8th graders, including a cookout, field day and a moving up ceremony. All grades will be treated to a visit from an ice cream truck sponsored by the PTO.

**Elementary:** Brad spoke about end of the year activities and testing going on at the elementary schools. John mentioned that bridge funding for the proposed elementary school building project passed at Town Meeting.

VII. **Public Comment:** None

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

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ellen LaRose