



Meeting Minutes for Advisory Board Meeting – December 21, 2020

Attendance: Mary-Carol Waters, John Loughnane, Danielle Sutton, Mary Ellen LaRose, Jan Midiri, Diana Martucci, Ethan Blonder, Brad Pindel, Melissa Depina, Paul Marino, Eli Wasserman, Christy McKenney, Sophia Hebert, Trish Tucke, David Russell, Maeve Hutton, Emily Greco

I. **Call to Order:** The meeting convened via Zoom Webinar and was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

II. **Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:** A motion was made a motion and seconded to accept the 11/23/20 minutes. All were in favor of approving the minutes.

III. **Director's Report:**

Clinical Services

*There are currently 50 counseling clients on the WY&FS caseload, 41 individual clients; 0 family clients; 9 parent consultations. (This total is compared to 46 at our last meeting in November; 40 in December of 2019; 50 in December of 2018 and 49 in December of 2017). In January, we anticipate being able to place 6 new clients between our two Graduate Interns.

*There were 5 new intakes for counseling services since our last meeting in November (compare to 5 intakes last month; 5 intakes in December 2019; 4 in December 2018; 8 in December 2017). There are currently 12 individuals or families on our "waitlist" for counseling services, (compared to 13 in November; 5 in December 2019 and zero in 2018 and 2017). 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.

*Due to the current safety restrictions during COVID-19, we are not running our usual Structured Play Group (K-5th grade social skills groups) and Girls Group (4th-6th grade) programs this fall. We will reassess as we move into winter, and continuously throughout the school year, with the hope of starting them up again as soon as possible.

Program Updates

*Our annual Holiday Giving program, coordinated by Mary Ellen, provided holiday gifts for 75 children from 40 families. Thanks to a generous donation of \$1,000 in Burlington (formerly known as Burlington Coat Factory) gift cards from the Westwood Rotary Club, and another \$1,000 anonymous donation from a resident, all families in the Holiday Giving program were also able to receive gift cards towards the purchase of winter coats and/or cold weather accessories for their children.

*Westwood Writes: An Intergenerational Pen Pal Program began in October and is going well with 18 pen pal pairs currently exchanging letters!

*There is a confirmed group of 11 high school volunteers, past participants from the Bullying Prevention Theater program, who will begin working with Emily Greco to revise and update the BPT script in the new year.

*First semester evaluations have been completed for our Graduate Interns, Tina and Anna Rose, and both are doing very well. In keeping with the schedules of their programs at Simmons and BC Schools of Social Work, both interns will be on break from December 23rd through January 1st.

Upon their return in the first week of January, Tina and Anna Rose will begin collating the data from our community-wide Parent/Guardian Survey and taking on new counseling clients.

Community Connections

*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.

*The Y&FS department is officially moved out of the Islington Community Center! Thanks to the work of our colleagues in the Department of Public Works, led by Facilities Director, Jim McCarthy, our move was quick and uneventful. The Y&FS department will now be housed in temporary space in Town Hall before settling into our permanent office space in the newly designed addition on Wentworth Hall in summer of 2021.

*Y&FS led efforts to utilize COVID-19 relief funding to pay for a town-wide mailing of informational postcards and magnets about the INTERFACE Referral Service. Postcards with magnets were expected to be in mailboxes in early December, and though they went into the mail on December 4th they have yet to reach mailboxes due to delays in the postal system. We're now expecting that they will be delivered sometime this week!

*Y&FS has been asked to join the Thurston Middle School for their Signs of Suicide (S.O.S.) program and depression screenings in the 7th grade on January 11th and 14th (rescheduled from December 7th and 10th).

*Two adults in the Westwood community who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) or Latinx have been chosen to serve on the leadership team of the regional Youth Substance Use Prevention Collaborative (Westwood, Needham, Norwood, Dedham). The Collaborative is still seeking a "youth" community member from the 9th or 10th grade to serve on the leadership team for a new grant that will begin in July 2021. The time commitment will consist of monthly, 90 minute meetings over the first year of the grant (July 2021-July 2022) and there is a \$150 quarterly stipend for any leadership team members who are not municipal or school employees (\$600 total for the year).

V. New Business

Wentworth Hall and Islington Community Center Updates: Danielle shared that WY&FS moved out of the Islington Community Center the week of December 14th. The department will be temporarily housed in the lower level of Town Hall. Staff will work remotely for a few weeks while the temporary quarters are prepared. Danielle said the current outlook is that the building will be ready for WY&FS to move in during the summer of 2021.

FY22 Budget Submission: Danielle explained the budgeting process and that WY&FS continues to be funded at the current level for the FY22 budget year.

Community Liaisons:

Community Chest: Danielle shared that Community Chest is preparing for a virtual fundraising gala in lieu of their annual Chiara fundraiser.

Westwood Police: Brad reported that department recently swore in three new officers. The department has seen a decrease in the number of unemployment fraud claims.

Westwood Comprehensive Plan: Jan explained that the Comprehensive Plan has been formally accepted by the Select Board and will now go to Town Meeting for approval and a vote in 2021. The work of the Comprehensive Plan Committee is complete.

Early Childhood Council: Danielle mentioned the previously discussed ECC programs: Read in Color, which aims to distribute books in “Little Free Libraries” on different perspectives on race and social justice and “1000 books by Kindergarten”, which encourages parents to read 1000 or more books to their children by the time they reach kindergarten.

Food Pantry: Trish gave an update on distribution and numbers of clients enrolled.

Schools Update:

Westwood High School: The students commented they continue to see an uptick in students who are choosing fully remote instruction. Melissa gave additional details about the parenting series for which METCO and WY&FS plan to collaborate.

Elementary Schools: Board members who are parents of elementary school students gave updates on how schools and students are proceeding under COVID-19 protocols.

Thurston Middle School: Danielle mentioned that WY&FS will be assisting with the Signs of Suicide (SOS) depression screening program for 7th graders that has been rescheduled from December to January 11th and 14th.

VI. **Public Comment:** None

VII. **Adjournment** - The meeting was called to adjournment at 7:50 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ellen LaRose