



Meeting Minutes for Advisory Board Meeting – November 25, 2019

Attendance: Sahara Hayes, Ethan Blonder, Brad Pindel, Diana Bezdedeau, John Loughnane, Mary Ellen LaRose, Danielle Sutton, David Russell, Christy Harrison, Diana Martucci, Sam Nelson, Mary-Carol Waters, Sophia Hebert

I. **Call to Order:** The meeting convened at the Islington Community Center and was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

II. **Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:** David made a motion and Mary-Carol seconded to accept the 10/28/19 minutes. All were in favor of approving the minutes.

III. Director's Report:

We are so pleased to announce the arrival of Vivian Carol Baroud, who was born on October 30th! Sarah Baroud, our Clinical Coordinator, along with her husband, John, and son, Nate, are thrilled to welcome Vivian into their family.

An exciting arrival of a different kind is also noteworthy: Today is the first day for Westwood's new Town Administrator, Christopher Coleman. Chris has come to Westwood from his previous role as an Assistant Town Administrator in Needham. We welcome Chris into this new role and hope to have him to a WY&FS Advisory Board meeting as a part of his first months of onboarding!

Clinical Services

*There are currently **41 counseling clients** on the WY&FS caseload, 36 individual clients; 1 family client; 4 parent consultations. (*This total is compared to 45 at our last meeting in September, 44 in November of 2018 and 49 in November of 2017.*)

*There have been **8 new intakes** for counseling services so far in November (*compare to 9 intakes in November 2018 and 10 in November 2017*). There are currently no individuals or families on our waitlist for counseling services, compared to 3 at our last meeting in September, and intakes are typically able to be assigned to clinicians within two weeks. As always, referrals are triaged so that those residents in most immediate need are prioritized.

*Our first round of **Structured Play Groups** ended in November, and the next round will begin in the first week of December with two eight-week groups for Kindergarten/1st graders on both Wednesdays and Thursdays. There are still 1-2 openings in the upcoming Structured Play Groups, so any interested Kindergarten or 1st grade residents are welcome to sign up! The 12-week Tuesday **Girls Group** for 4th/5th graders continues through December 3rd.

Program Updates

*The annual **Holiday Giving** program is running smoothly again this year thanks to the efforts of Mary Ellen LaRose. The deadline for registration was November 4th and then the intensive process of matching donors and recipients was carried out last week. Local donors have now begun dropping off gifts, so it's beginning to feel festive here in the office!

*Our **Graduate Intern**, Hope Dragelin, has been with us since early September. At this stage of the year she has a number of clients that she is seeing each week, and she is nearing the end of her first semester. We met last week with Hope's Faculty Advisor from the BC School of Social Work for her fall site visit and we will be completing her formal evaluation in the first week of December.

***Bullying Prevention Theater (BPT)** rehearsals have been taking place since September 26th and the 35 high school volunteer Mentors have begun to memorize their lines in anticipation of the January performance dates at the Thurston.

*The next **Friday Nights @ Thurston** event will take place on December 13th. This event will include a Dodgeball Tournament and DJ Addie from WHS, along with the high school volunteer Mentors.

*Orientation for the **Friends Network** program was held on October 30th and the program kicked off in full the following week on November 6th. There are 30 pairs of “Big Friends” and “Little Friends” across two weekly evening sessions held at the Council on Aging. Mary Ellen gave an overview of the program.

***Teen Scene @ the Library** is ongoing, with 14 volunteer Mentors serving on Early Release Wednesdays and Fridays working in coordination with the new Teen Librarian to help engage the large numbers of Thurston students that go to the Main Library on those afternoons.

*Early coordination has begun for the Spring **Body Safety Theater** program. Although the performances don't take place until May 2020, it is necessary to coordinate dates and spaces with all five elementary schools and with the high school so the process must begin now. Rehearsals will commence for high school volunteer Mentors in January, after BPT wraps up.

Community Connections

*On Monday, November 18th, Westwood Cares hosted a parent event, *The Secret Life of Teens & Tweens*, presented by Jon Mattleman. There were 78 parents in attendance and the audience survey results were very positive.

*Regular weekly meetings continue for the **Wentworth Hall Redevelopment Project**. Each Thursday, WY&FS joins other stakeholders at these meetings to learn about and discuss ongoing aspects of the project.

IV. Old Business

Holiday Giving Program: Mary Ellen explained how the program works for Westwood families in need. Jan Midiri oversees a similar program for the children served by the state's Department of Children and Families. Gifts for that program are also dropped off at the ICC

V. New Business:

Wentworth Hall - Islington Community Center Update: Danielle shared information regarding the “Pop Up Library” in the ICC Sanctuary space. Danielle attended a meeting with MMO parents, the MMO director, the town administrator, library staff and others regarding access to the bathrooms by library patrons when the MMO preschool is in session. Danielle gave the board an overview of the compromise that was reached. She also answered questions from board members regarding the MMO's letter to the public explaining their decision to not to relocate to a new space in the old CVS building. Given Board Member questions on the topic over the last two meetings, Danielle distributed copies of the joint letter from the Town and Developer regarding the Islington Center project. Danielle continues to attend weekly meetings on the Wentworth Hall Redevelopment. Upcoming meetings will include discussion on the proposed reconciled estimate to the budget and vision of the project.

Nomination Procedure & Bylaw Review Danielle thanked David Russell for his initial work reviewing the Advisory Board bylaws. She asked members to let her or Mary Ellen know if they are interested in joining the nomination review sub-committee.

Community Liaisons:

Westwood Cares: John shared information on the recent parent talk on November 18th with John Mattleman, the former director of Needham Youth Services on the “Secret Life of Teens.” Close to 80 parents attended the talk, which focused on parenting teens/tweens and learning more about what they are really thinking and how to best support them. John encouraged board members to follow John Mattleman on Social Media, as he often posts helpful parenting advice. A discussion followed regarding the stresses teens/tweens face, the pressure to always be connected, phone use and ideas regarding establishing family phone contracts. Danielle suggested the websites, Common Sense Media and Screenagers as places parents can go for resources on these subjects.

Early Childhood Council: Diana spoke about an upcoming meeting on 12/4 that Emily Parks will be holding for Westwood preschool parents on the Elementary School Building Project. She also mentioned a story walk that ECC is sponsoring at Hale Reservation.

Westwood Police Department: Brad reported there have been a number of car break-ins on Oak Street in town. He encouraged residents to lock their car doors.

Food Pantry: David and Mary Ellen reported that pantry board members, along with high school and other local volunteers recently collected and sorted donations from the Cub Scouts Scouting for Food Drive. The drive although successful brought in fewer donations than in years past. The pantry is exploring running a similar drive with Westwood Girl Scouts in the spring.

Westwood High School: Student board members expressed their frustrations regarding the WHS library space restrictions and caps on the number of students allowed in the library during lunch and their free blocks. Currently, there is a student led movement that has called on the school administration to act and work jointly with students on this issue.

Westwood Elementary Schools: Diana encouraged board members to spread the word and attend one of the Elementary Schools Building Projects coming up on December 9th and 12th. The meetings will focus on new educational practices that will play a role in the design. The public can learn more about the project and voice their feedback.

VI. Adjournment - The meeting was called to adjournment at 8:30 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ellen LaRose