

## **Weston Commission for Children and Youth Minutes from the September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015 Meeting**

In attendance: Lynn Phillips, Jeff Drobner, Dan McNeill Cathy Minter, Ellen Wyrech Alison Lisbon, Charlene Monn,

Meeting called to order at 5:42 pm by Michelle Albright.

### Approval of Minutes

- Minutes from the May meeting were approved with the deletion of Charlene Monn as she was not in attendance for the May meeting.

### Commission membership status updates

- Members were introduced to Alison Lisbon, a mother of three boys (9 year-old-twins and an 8-year-old) who attend Weston schools. Alison is also a licensed clinical social worker and works closely with St. Francis preschool. Members agreed that Alison would be a wonderful addition to the Commission and Michelle will follow up with Gayle regarding her appointment
- Members discussed whether there would be any potential conflict between Dan's roles as a member of the Commission and the Board of Education. Members did not perceive any conflict and were in agreement that Dan should be appointed to the Commission.
- Chris is running for Selectman in the fall and will need to step down as a member of the Commission if he is elected.
- As both Lindsey and Mackenzie will be seniors next year, we will need to recruit some additional student representatives. Members discussed potential candidates and the value of having Lindsey and Mackenzie help recruit incoming juniors.

### Review of programs from the 2014-2015 academic year

- Charlene shared two charts illustrating the number of WOW programs, as well as the number of participants in programs across the schools over the past two years. Participation had dropped slightly from 2013 to 2014 but increased from 2014 to 2015. Moreover, many of the programs we did run in 2014-2015 were filled to capacity. We have continued to expand our program offerings and tailor classes to meet the interests and needs of students and families in the community. All Commission members acknowledged Charlene's role in ensuring that WOW! is successful – we are thankful for her tireless efforts!
- Members also discussed the Taste of WOW! program we piloted this year; although students and parents enjoyed the program, it did meet our goal of running as a hand-in-hand program and included a very high staff to student ratio. Given that all our WOW! programs are inclusive to students with special needs Commission members agreed that we would continue to invite participation in our regular programming and provide parents with individual suggestions regarding teachers and classes that might be a better match for students with particular needs.
- Michelle shared a chart showing attendance at Tackling the Tough Stuff over the year, as well as additional activities we co-sponsored for students and families. Over the year we had 301 parents (including repeat attendees) participate in the Tackling series, in addition to over 150 attend the Brooks event. Members discussed patterns in attendance; although there is was no obvious trend the consistent participation certainly justifies the programming costs and efforts. Moreover, parents are receptive to varying the time and day of activities, and big name speakers appear to draw significant interest and participation. As in past years, attendance drops during December and January, as well as in May suggesting that we continue to consider holiday and school schedules when planning events.

### Program plans and priorities for 2015-2016

- Michelle shared a document highlighting areas and issues of interest/relevance, and what WYS is already and could be doing to address these (including potential and planned next steps). Members discussed using additional local venues such as the Senior Center and Cobbs Mill Inn to hold events and enhance social

interaction. Members discussed the need for programming that addresses parents concerns about what is “normal/typical” and how to identify more serious or problematic behaviors, as well as programming that addresses issues related to standardized test taking including how to manage anxiety and information the meaning and value of test results. Michelle will coordinate with school staff to ensure that any programming related to test taking complements already planned or existing efforts.

- Members discussed Family University and both the value and potential complications of holding an event for both parents and children to participate in together. Members were concerned that middle school students are not particularly interested in attending with their parents and would need a significant incentive to participate. Members also discussed how last year’s Family University had very low attendance in contrast to the Dr. Brooks presentation, and debated whether programming efforts and funds were better used toward finding another well known speaker just for parents. Members also discussed the possibility of holding a purely social event for parents and children (such as Field Day, trivia night, dodge ball, or Family Feud) to promote interaction.
- Michelle shared a list of potential/planned programs for the 2015-2016 year including the Coffee and Conversation series in partnership with Wilton Youth Services and Silver Hill Hospital. Westport will be hosting Daniel Rechtschaffen (The Way of Mindful Education) and we have been invited to co-sponsor this event with them or piggyback on his visit to bring him to Weston.
- Members discussed the meeting schedule for next year – we will plan on meeting the third Monday of each month at 5:30 with some adjustments for school vacations. As of now our meeting schedule for 2015-2016 is as follows:  
September 21<sup>st</sup>, October 19<sup>th</sup>, November 16<sup>th</sup>, December 21<sup>st</sup>, January 11<sup>th</sup>, February 8<sup>th</sup>, March 21<sup>st</sup>, April 18<sup>th</sup> and May 16<sup>th</sup>

Meeting adjourned at 7:07 pm

Respectfully submitted, Michelle Albright