

North Reading Youth Services Committee Meeting

Date/Time: Monday, March 27, 2023 / 6:00 pm

Location: Local History Room, Flint Memorial
Library

Committee Members Present	Committee Members Absent	Guests/Visitors Present
Peter Majane, Chair		Lil Hartman, Director of Public Services
	Jason Slattery, Vice-Chair	Tyler Hixson, Asst Director of the Library
Beatriz Vautin, Secretary		
Frank Ferraro		
Jodi Sponzo		
	Amy DiChiara	
Alexis Arsenis		

1. **Call to Order.** Chair Peter Majane called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. **Review of Minutes.** February 27, 2023 minutes were reviewed and accepted.
3. **Old Business.** Update from Public Services Director. See attached notes. We did not talk about the YS and YSC Transcript article.
4. **New Business.**
 - a. Space request for intergenerational center: Staff in various departments are being asked about what space needs they would have for the next 5-25 years in the Intergenerational space being proposed as part of the NR facilities master plan. It was suggested that Youth Services has a representative on the facilities master planning group to give input on needs throughout the process. Conduct a survey of middle and high school youth to learn what they want/need for programming to dictate what space is needed. It's hard to comment on what space we need given that we don't have much programming at the moment. Could any committee members go to visiting towns to look at recreation centers to see what would be nice to have in NR? Towns suggested by Lillian are Andover, North Andover, and Ipswich.

The library has some space but doesn't have the staff to run teen programming, but the space isn't very large or utilized. Here is the list of brainstormed ideas of what a Teen space needs:

- Where they can be loud, set up chairs and snacks, hang out
- "teen friendly furniture"
- needs to just be their space, no adults allowed- "if over the age of 18 need to be accompanied by a minor"
- Monitoring ability through open doors or glass structure, needs to have an adult whose

assigned to monitor, nonthreatening but respected

- Open space
- Plants or other natural elements that youth have to care for, water features
- Connected to outdoor space
- Nonprofit afterschool spaces have multiple floors or various rooms - Comfy couch rooms, Homework/desk rooms, Lecture space with tables, whiteboard and technology, Rec space to play games; place to be able to eat
- Quiet zone separate from loud zone
- Needs fast wifi and lots of charging space
- School space use existing unused space

Lillian will bring these to the committee meeting next week and share back with the committee what was said.

b. YSC survey: Here are some potential questions and hypotheses that were generated during the meeting.

- If you participated in NRYs programs how did you get involved?
- How would you get to programs?
- Are you in sports?
- Do you have a stay-at-home parent?
- What would make you feel comfortable, how would you choose a place to spend time outside of school?

Could we do a focus group instead of a survey? Can we do a survey monkey type survey or QR code instead of pen and paper? Needs to have an incentive to fill out the survey. Does the town have an advantage to get better access to the students in the schools? Could this be completed during powerblock or the HRMS library?

Lil is looking for two volunteers to help her work on the survey questions this week. We need to keep in mind that the department is still a one person show and cannot grow programming until the department grows. (this need later changed as the group decided posting the position didn't need to be rushed and that we would work on the questions at the April meeting.)

c. Staffing model and search: YSC mission: nebulous, committee member struggled to separate the committee from Department and director's work based on what is written on the website. One member said YSC mission is to assist youth in distress, help them in their lives, help them grow into successful adults. Prevent drug and alcohol use, other issues individual mental health. Mission from website for Youth Services says North Reading Youth Services' mission is to allow for the voice of our youth to be heard in the community. We strive to establish youth-driven social and experiential activities and provide opportunities for young adults to become active members of our community. Through these

programs we hope to foster a healthy self-image and encourage positive decision-making. We support families of all abilities and backgrounds.

Who does this work?

- NRPD: LMHC/clinician; Drug free community grant for drug prevention work and positive youth development; school resource officer Note: concern that Community Impact Team needs to organize with YSC
- Library: Dungeons and Dragons club, video games, anime club, walkable, safe space, are they mandatory reporters?
- Recreation Department: K-5 programs, invite Nancy (recreation director) to a meeting, summer employment/camp
- Schools: LGBTQ club, easy access, guidance department

Need youth voice on this committee; library has teen advisory panel; YSC recently has reached out to Guidance departments to see if they can identify youth to be participants on the YSC, but no one has said yes. Do we want Peter to work with Patrick Daly to identify youth to form an advisory council to YSC or have at least a focus group with the students. Need to have incentive for youth to get involved and lead projects in the community. Alexis and Peter will work on getting youth input and/or identifying youth to get involved.

What are adults not doing for you now? Is there a need for Youth Services still, is there too much overlap with other programs being run in town by others. YS started an LGBTQ club many years ago which was then taken over by the HS. Why is there no follow-up between the groups such as NRPD or CIT on topics that they have identified as important enough to run a program on; shouldn't be one and done?

This job seems like it should be posted for a social worker type person. This sounds like a lot of stuff that a teen librarian would do with the support of the library staff behind them. Nothing is currently posted for the new director. There is the full-time salary and \$12K in the budget for contractor hours to help with programming. Consensus that we do not need to rush to post the job.

5. Set date for next meeting.

April 24 a meeting to work on the Survey.

Proposal to move the May 22 meeting to May 15; confirm by email.

Agenda items for May meeting: get youth advisors (Alexis and Peter with schools)

Examine structure of YS and YSC

Invite Nancy from Parks and Rec to have structural conversation about where YS fits and programming needs

Jodi Sponzo moved to adjourn the meeting; Beatriz seconded the motion.

Next meeting: April 24, 2023

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Documents/Handouts

February 2023 Minutes

 4/24/23

Minutes Approved on Date

YSC Update from Public Services Director 3/27/23

Mentoring program resumed after 2-week break, with Jen Ford leading March 8 to June 14. Reality Fair planning is underway with ENORMOUS thanks to Amy Luckiewicz. We have 24 volunteers as of 3/27 with volunteer orientations running 3/23-3/30. A few more volunteers would be handy to fill all positions, and to ensure coverage if one or two call-out sick.

On March 25, Lil represented NRYS and Public Services at a school-sponsored Family University event. Youth Services materials included mentor recruitment flyer (requested by Jen Ford) and "Spread Positivity – North Reading Cares" wrist bands.

At a CIT Youth Substance Use Prevention Coalition event Feb 7, Julie Elkins and Erin McGaffigan expressed interest in volunteering. Both are experts in community-level promotion of civic engagement, and might help with feedback processes, developing youth-community projects, or helping departments create successful volunteer programs. Julie Elkins will be at the Reality Fair.

The Flint Memorial Library renovation for Youth Services flex space is complete. Tyler Hixson, Assistant Director of the Library, will be at the Reality Fair and participates in the CIT Coalition.

Select Board and Finance Committee heard budget presentations 3/13. Feedback from the Select Board included positive comments about the Reality Fair, some confusion about whether the Reality Fair is sponsored by NRYS or schools, one mention that mental health is covered by other units and does not need to be part of NRYS, and one concern that the salary for director is too low. Finance Committee brought up the need for consistency, questioning the use of contractors or instructors. Lil suggested that relying on one person alone makes program availability inconsistent. Vincenzo Stuto (Select Board), Abby Hurlbut (FinCom) and Don Kelliher (FinCom) will be at the Reality Fair April 12.

Software: Departments must coordinate with IT and division heads before implementing new technology or online accounts. For NRYS to store student data securely and accessible remotely, Recreation has offered the use of myRec software, and IT has provided a VPN with access to a shared department folder. Lil will work with IT and Town Clerk to compare the benefits of additional tools, Citrix and Laserfiche for electronic file storage.

Committee Feedback Needed

On April 5, staff will meet to identify projected program / space needs for an intergenerational community center. If Committee members could visit nearby community centers (Andover, North Andover, Ipswich), please let Lil know what you'd like for North Reading! Any of your comments about space needs will be shared with the workgroup, and there may be a specific meeting where you are invited to review the space needs report so far.

Commission on Disabilities is beginning to formulate survey questions to understand the unmet needs of residents, including youth transitioning from the K-12 system (incl. special education up to age 22) to adulthood. What questions would you ask to better understand the needs of our disability community? YSC members are invited to participate in their Tuesday, March 28 meeting, 7pm (Town Hall).

Suggested next steps before job posting: 1) Conduct a survey of needs so families can identify what skills, schedule and programming are needed most. 2) Consider mission and program overlap that has developed over the past 20 years between departments, and ways to leverage programs and staff in other departments to meet NRYS mission without duplicating effort. 3) Consider reducing NRYS time on administrative tasks, increasing youth-facing time with contractors, part-time staff, or shared staff.