

North Reading Youth Services Committee Meeting

Date/Time: Monday, October 25, 2021 / 6:00 pm **Location:** Zoom -Teleconference

Committee Members Present		Committee Members Absent	Guests/Visitors Present
Peter Majane, Chair	Jodi Sponzo	Christy Damphousse	Jennifer Ford, YS Director
Jason Slattery, Vice-Chair	Yan Huang	Patty Harrington	Liane Gonzalez, Selectwoman
Deborah Mahoney, Secretary		Amy DiChiara	Jacob Mullin-Bernstein
Frank Ferraro			Dr. Patrick Daly, NRPS Superintendent
Leslie Schultz			

Chair Peter Majane called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Guest speaker Dr. Patrick Daly, NRPS Superintendent

Chair Peter Majane introduced Dr. Patrick Daly, NRPS Superintendent. Dr. Daly thanked the committee for their work in the community. Dr. Daly spoke regarding the highlights and challenges of the school year to date. Currently all is going well being back in school five days a week and administration is identifying areas where there needs to be more focus. The mask mandate is in effect until November 1 so more guidance will be coming soon. There is hope that with a vaccination to be approved for the youngest students the mask mandates may change. NR schools have been successful with the vaccination clinics, pooled testing, and test-and-stay which has allowed more students to stay in school. It is exciting to see activities and sports happening and back to some normalcy.

Committee members asked questions regarding mask mandates and it being lifted, the feelings of staff and students on wearing masks, and mental health and behavior of students and teachers. Dr. Daly discussed each topic in detail. Some highlights follow. Staff feel that the majority of students want to be in school and have made wearing masks work. There is no transmission being seen at school because masks are being worn. The mask mandates are to be discussed this week and are tied to numbers. Our schools have plateaued at 77% since August and since the HS and MS are viewed as one school it does not yet meet the 80% threshold. The MS principal reports less incidents on the bus which may be tied to the fact that MS and HS students are now sharing buses. Students are more fragile because of the past year and a half so there is an increase in anxiety. Schools have increased support and are performing universal screenings trying to determine what the needs are. Two adjustment counselors have been added at the district level and one guidance counselor added at the high school. The bridge program has been strengthened for those needing a non-traditional structure. Dr. Daly regularly participates in meetings with other town officials regarding COVID data, where we are going and keeping up to date with information sharing. Dr. Daly feels that the things that have gotten us to where we are now and being able to be in school as much as possible are the excellent principals and administrative staff, the voices from parents and students, the work with the unions and the new and updated buildings. Chair Peter Majane thanked Dr. Daly for all his hard work and his time.

1. Review of July Minutes: September 27, 2021 minutes were reviewed and accepted.

2. Financial Report: No change in finances. Jen Ford, YS Director prefers to stay safe with programming and have kids bring their own snacks to minimize sharing during the pandemic.

3. Participation Report: Fall programming is up and running and Jen Ford, YS Director is able to use MS/HS space for programs. Current groups running are MS youth group, mentoring for MS and ES students, YAT, FREEFORM, 5th Grade Girls Group, Early Act, and Project Peace. Some families liked

virtual mentoring so Jen Ford, YS Director is being creative with all programs to make them accessible to all. Enrollment is not up to where it was pre-COVID but each group has a solid core attendance. Programs are not being promoted a lot because the situation could change at any time. Jen Ford, YS Director stated how nice it is to be back with the kids in person.

FaceTime with Santa is being organized for this year and the goal is to have 25 hours of scheduling. Elementary school has some half days in early December so the focus will be on those days. This program was a huge success last year. YS Director Jen Ford is working with the HS media center and guidance department to bring some guest speakers to the school during Power Block. Students interested in those in particular fields would then be able to hear more about them from professionals in the field.

YS Director Jen Ford is having discussions with the DFC grant director and the library regarding a program called "Talk about Touching" geared toward younger children. Following up on our last meeting, this Thursday, October 28 there will be a session to discuss the results from the Age Friendly survey. Jen Ford, YS Director is a member of the Mental Health task force and they are creating a self-care week November 15 - 19. There's a wide array of programs including virtual activities, relevant articles and individual challenges, all focused on self-care. North Reading did get our DFC grant for \$625K renewed for another five years. The feedback received from the reviewers was fantastic and they stated that our program is a model coalition. Guiding Good Choices, the offered parenting curriculum course is now in its 4th week. It is a great group of parents and there is a lot of discussion. The curriculum is geared toward 9-14 year olds but anyone caring for youth could benefit. The curriculum was updated and more current than when the courses were held in 2019.

4. Social Services Report: YS Director Jen Ford continues to have a lot of the same conversations about anxiety as in previous months. Many individuals who did not struggle in the past are now struggling. Committee member Jason Slattery stated that on a positive note he is seeing kids wanting to step up and take action and be involved in activities more so than in the past.

5. Old Business: No old business to discuss.

6. New Business: Committee members told YS Director Jen Ford to keep up the good work. Selectwoman Liane Gonzalez stated that she was happy to be able to join us this month. There were comments on how Dr. Daly is doing a great job in his position and keeping everyone up to date and informed and the committee was grateful to have him speak with us. The committee had a discussion regarding attendance at meetings and making a quorum for each meeting. The committee also discussed upcoming term expirations and a replacement for a vacant position. YS Director Jen Ford thanked all committee members and appreciated their support for meeting and making the time for the committee.

Next meeting: November 22, 2021 **Meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.**

Documents/Handouts	
September 2021 Minutes	

November 22, 2021

Minutes Approved on Date


Peter Majane, Committee Chair