

**CITY OF WEST HAVEN
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION
MINUTES OF MEETING
JANUARY 18, 2022, 6:00 p.m. WHHS Teacher Lounge**

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Manager, Mark Bisaccia.

Present: Members: Victor Borrás, Michele Miller, Roberta Garlock, Jeffrey Moreno, Colleen O'Connor.
Staff Rosa Richardson, Mark Bisaccia

Absent: Member, Carol Eagles.

ADOLESCENT/ ADULT SOCIAL GROUP- Diane Dietman of WH Youth and Family Services introduced herself and informed the Committee that was here this evening to present a total of 4 Applications. She has been Director of WHYF for a full year at this point and due to the pandemic, the activities that her department provides have been hampered. This group visited Lyman Orchards and did the corn maze in the Fall.

This program is driven by parent volunteers. It allows an opportunity for this age group to go into the community, with supervision, but not parents and allows them to participate in many social activities while learning the necessary skills and appropriate behaviors. It also allows the participant to have to be responsible and independent while enjoying the social experience.

This is a limited group size of 14-16 members with adult volunteers/ supervisors. It is designed for ages 14-21 and the participant is interviewed in order to be considered. Member Michele asked if this is a program credit toward graduation. It is not. Member O'Connor asked if masks are a requirement for participation in these activities. They are recommended and masks are available to the participants.

Member Borrás recommended that they err on the side of safety as he had lost his father to this illness.

CHILDREN W/ SPECIAL NEEDS- This program is a much larger activity-based program, similar to the Adolescent/ Adult Social except parents/ guardians and siblings participate as well. Families participate in many outings/ events, once a month or at least quarterly. Throughout the pandemic, activities were provided virtual, including a paint party and a virtual music trivia dance event.

In December they held an in-person, Holiday Fiesta Party which encompassed all groups including Spanish, Adolescent/ Adult and Children with Special needs. They also went on the Essex Steam Train.

The Spanish speaking participants were very happy to have participated in these events and ongoing participation will continue to be extended to them. This program averages approximately 40 family units per quarter.

CAC Member Borrás thanked Ms. Dietman for providing these activities to our children.

PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS- There are different Support groups provided: Spanish, Autism, Special Needs, and newly begun Bereavement. This is for parents of children lost to illness, injury, suicide etc.

There are 4 facilitators: 2 parents 2 Special needs and also three parent advocates. During these groups, there are many topics discussed; health issues, transitioning, legal planning to name a few.

CAC Member O'Connor asked for clarification on the bereavement. Ms. Dietman explained that this is a new support group being offered due to an influx of requests. There is often difficulty for parents to find child care for children for children special needs. By providing this service, parents can participate and be comfortable knowing that their child is safe and cared for. Program funds are used to provide child care during these group sessions. Ms. Dietman has reached out the WHHS Peer Advocates who used to assist with child care services.

CLINIC- This program is in the process of being revamped since clinicians were unable to return after a long break due to COVID. Additionally, the Clinical Supervisor has since retired as well as the Clinic Manager. Ms. Dietman is working with the Department Head at SCSU to find replacements in order to continue to provide additional clinical support, through interns, for our Youth and families.

HUMAN RESOURCE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE- Upon Beth Sabo's partial retirement, Ms. Dietman has assumed responsibility of the Emergency Assistance Funding. Funds are used to supplement/ not supplant funds for emergency assistance for our residents. Ha asked Ms. Dietman to ensure that there are appropriate funds within the city budget since she is fairly new to this process.

Mr. Bisaccia spoke briefly about the concerns expressed last year while preparing the 5 Year Plan. The City of West Haven has an aging work force. The city is not alone. There have been many staff changes within the agencies funded through CDBG (Columbus House, Community House) and preparing appropriately for these changes is very important. Mr. Bisaccia felt it important to bring this matter up once again, since transitioning has become an issue within the City.

CAC Member O'Connor stated that she does not have any questions, but She wanted to thank Ms. Dietman for stepping into this role as Director of Youth and Family Services. She stated that Ms. Dietman has a very big heart.

Ms. Dietman thanked the Committee for their time and support of these programs. She left at 6:50 p.m.

W.H.E.A.T. - After introductions, Ms. Majestic informed the Committee that WHEAT had undergone major changes throughout these times of COVID. Major Modifying to the interior of the building for safety of the clients as well as the volunteers, social distancing, PPE, switching to brown grocery bags just to name a few. In the beginning of the pandemic, the client base increased dramatically, especially seniors and veterans. WHEAT also moved to 3 days per week from 4 since due to staffing issues. She is hopeful to go back to 4 days per week soon.

She explained the WHEAT has been working with other agencies such as Vertical Church, Purple Pantry and FISH to ensure that all people are provided with the necessary food. At one point WHEAT also went to providing food twice monthly instead of once. Slowly, the need dropped, probably due to the increase in SNAP and free breakfast/ lunch programs within our schools.

WHEAT has not requested capital improvement funds this year but continue to apply for staff salary support. She explained that they have hired a 3rd staff person, a mini comptroller/ bookkeeper, in order to take some of those financial duties off of her plate. They are paying more than minimum wage to the pantry coordinator as well. Additionally, they have begun transitioning since she will be retiring this year.

Mr. Bisaccia asked if they will have the ability to go back to 4 days per week? He asked based on staffing levels. She stated they will take it step by step.

The Committee as well as the CDA Staff, wished Rose well on her future retirement and were all in agreement that although she will turn over the helm, they are confident that she will remain very involved.

They thanked her for her service and she thanked them for they commitment and support. She left at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Rosa Richardson

Please note: minutes are subject to approval

