

NEWTON YOUTH COMMISSION Meeting

December 2, 2009 MINUTES
Location: Newton City Hall Cafeteria

Present: Joe De Vito (Chair), Richard Dyer, Donna Gordon, Robert Staulo;
Tony Bibbo, Chris Fortunato, Matt Green, Peter Harrington, Ofc. Jeff Mace,
Ellen Manning, Stephanie Pelkowsky, Stephan Ross, John Staulo, Kirsten Tuohy
Students: Zachary Eagle, Tamara Matama

Regrets: Marianne Cook, Terance Sack
Students: Gerry Lueng, Kyle Olson, Zoe Pepper-Cunningham, Adam Sangiolo,
Ariana Tabatabaie

Staff: Beverly Droz, Director, Human and Volunteer Services

Guests: None present

The meeting was opened at 7:05 PM and chaired by Joe De Vito. Introductions were made.

A motion was made and approved to accept the minutes of November 4, 2009.

Restorative Justice

At last month's meeting, NSHS teachers presented an overview of what has been happening in Newton with Restorative Justice Circles (RJ) and proposed that the Newton Youth Commission sponsor it. (See 11/4/09 minutes). At that meeting, we formed a RJ Committee to look into it.

Donna reported that a large number of members attended the Nov. 19 meeting to learn more about RJ and discuss how the Youth Commission might sponsor this program. She thanked Tony, Marianne, Bev, Rick, Ellen, Stephanie and Terry for attending and noted that Officer Katie Doyle attended as Jeff was unable to. Rich Catrambone and Mark Hall were at the meeting and Bev noted that she and Viviana Planine were there representing the Human Rights Commission.

Donna reported that the idea is to have a public meeting/informational forum that would educate the community about RJ and get residents to sign up. It could be held at a central location like the Newton Library Auditorium. Rich and Mark would be the panelists, and our role would be to sponsor it and try to get people involved.

Ellen suggested that the PTSOs be invited due to their large base of parents. Others agreed, suggesting the forum be open to everyone including law officials.

Stephanie spoke to the role of the Youth Commission. She stated that we gather information and promote it to the public by first getting an endorsement from the new superintendent and the Mayor. She said we should focus on getting other schools involved first and eventually expand it to the community.

Discussion followed on the practices of restorative justice, what it represents and how it applies to the Newton Partnership as well as how it acts as a part of the continuum of disciplinary strategies in the Newton high schools and the community at large.

Tony asked who the trainers are, how they are certified and the need to address the issues of administration. It was noted that Rich and Henry have been trained and will train others.

Officer Mace attended a meeting last week with the District Attorney. They have a diversion program and are willing to work with the RJ program if it is in place. Obviously the general principle is to divert juveniles for non-violent offenses. Jeff thinks the first offense could lead to participation in the RJ program. If pre-arraignment is scheduled, the case is held open while the teen meets the RJ requirements. He suggested our Committee check with the Clerk Magistrate.

Chris wondered how many cases we were talking about and noted we would need to monitor them for rates of success. He also mentioned the need to define a repeat offense. Peter asked for examples of offenses at NSHS and Donna described some then noted that RJ has had much success there, with none of the students repeating offenses. In fact, they exhibit better behavior plus the victims feel healed. But again, these are in-school incidents that were non-violent and low level offenses.

Ellen stated that the schools are only able to handle what happens in the schools and that much of it happens outside of the schools. Stephanie agreed but said that the community piece will look different from what we present to the schools. She works at Parks & Recreations and noted the many ongoing offenses committed in the parklands.

Discussion followed and it was noted that Northeastern University teaches restorative justice and collaborative law so there are local resources.

Joe called upon the group to focus and walk through a scenario of what the information seminar would look like.

- Bob suggested that to begin with, it should be limited to schools.
- Peter said we have an interest in promoting this and we inquire about what kinds of crimes are included.
- Stephanie stated that the crimes don't have to be defined, we advocate for the program.
- Rick said he would like Rich C. to return and provide the Commission with more information.
- Peter stated this was an excellent opportunity for the Youth Commission but it needs to be better understood.
- Donna said a 3-hour training is coming up soon and that committee members can take it.
- Tony suggested having the RJ committee look into it and get more involved.

Peter **made a motion** that the Youth Commission has interest in Restorative Justice, we will sponsor an informational forum with the Human Rights Commission as a co-sponsor, and the JR committee will get more involved. Ellen seconded the motion and **the motion passed**.

Tamara asked where the students are in all of this. Ellen said the students can be trained in the RJ circle process.

The Youth Commission RJ Committee members include: Tony Bibbo, Marianne Cook, Bev Droz, Richard Dyer, Donna Gordon, Ellen Manning, Stephanie Pelkowsky, Terence Sack, Kirsten Tuohy, and student Tamara Matama. We will also invite Rich Catrambone, Officer Katie Doyle, Mark Hall, and Viviana Planine from the Human Rights Commission. Others are welcome to join it.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 PM.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, January 6 at 7:00PM

Respectfully submitted by Beverly Droz