

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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City of Newton Youth Commission Wednesday, January 10, 2024 @ 6:30pm Newton Free Library

Attendance:

Meghan Kennedy, Meri Haas, Spencer Solcoff, Zack Gusenoff, Armine Freeman, Grace Cai, Hana Futai, Julia Dun Rappaport, Kenneth Tsay, Matthew Wrigley, Priscilla Situ, Ryn Leffler, Sarina Chand, Phoebe Anthony, Gassia Minassian, Chloe Lee, Vikram Scherfke, Aanika Mohta, Eitan Leshem, Chloe Lyons, Pete Olhava, Joshua Levitt-Horne, Joya Tendulkar, Christian Chau, Maggie Crowley, Emma Zhang, Evie Shih, Dhruv Lal, Shivani Gulati, Allie Guo

Meeting called to order at 6:35pm.

View the Presentation Slides [HERE](#).

Youth Commission Updates/Reminders:

- I. Policy Reminder - Attendance Requirements
 - a. Commissioners 80% (no more than 2 absences)
 - b. Advisory Board 60% (no more than 4 absences)

- II. Subcommittee Sign-Ups
 - a. It's important to sign up so you can be notified of subcommittee activities moving forward.
 - b. Sign up using this [Sign-Up Genius link](#) or email Meri Haas at mhaas@newtonma.gov by **Friday, January 19th**.

- III. Commission Member Updates
 - a. If there is anything that you would like to add to future youth commission agendas (e.g. initiatives/speakers you'd like to propose, other items you'd like the commission to take action on or discuss) you **must** email them to Meri Haas (mhaas@newtonma.gov) by the end of the day the **Thursday before the upcoming meeting**.


Introduction to new Assistant Director of Youth Services, Meri Haas

- I. Meri Haas introduced herself to the commission and invited members to email her with any questions. (mhaas@newtonma.gov)

Commission Member Updates & Announcements

- I. There were no commission member updates or announcements at this meeting.

Subcommittee Breakout Groups

- I. Commission members broke out into their subcommittees to answer the questions below. After 10 minutes members were invited to switch to a second subcommittee, if interested.
 - a. What is the goal for the subcommittee?
 - b. What initiatives will the subcommittee work on this year?
 - c. Which initiative should be prioritized first?
 - d. What materials, people, etc. do you need to get started?
- II. See below for a list of subcommittees, lead youth commissioners, discussion notes, and upcoming meetings.
 - a. Mental Health & Wellness
 - i. Point Person: Zach (& Chloe)
 - ii. Goal: Offer at least one mental health/mindfulness workshop
 - iii. Ideas: Workshop centered on stress
 1. Stress: athletics, SAT/ACT, school work, job, social stress, family stress, college
 2. Guest speaker (teacher?)
 3. For parents and students (how to look out for your kids/friends/self)
 - iv. Ideas: Students talking about experiences
 - v. Ideas: Actionable steps to working and helping people struggling
 - vi. Ideas: Therapy dogs!! (from police station? Leo from NPD?)
 - vii. Ideas: Part 1 of Workshop (Education, Speakers: How to Help); Part 2 (Destress time: therapy dogs, art activities, journaling, stretches...)
 - viii. Workshop ideally during youth commission meeting time and in Druker (at Library) or another time when people are more free?
 - ix. Spreading the word about the event: Flyers, weekly updates. Focus on fun to draw people in (dogs, de-stress space, etc.)
 - x. Members who participated in discussion: Julia, Hana, Zach, Chloe, Chloe, Matthew, Shivani, Allie, Evie
 - xi. Future Subcommittee Meetings: 2nd Tuesday of every month from 7:00-8:00pm via Zoom.

- a. Communications
 - i. Point Person: Spencer (& Phoebe)
 - ii. Initiatives – Engage with local government
 - iii. Ideas – Website
 - 1. Businesses that want workers
 - 2. Links to easy apps
 - 3. Government jobs for HS students
 - 4. Open suggestions
 - 5. Information page
 - 6. Volunteer positions
 - 7. Open Discussion
 - 8. Q&A
 - iv. There was discussion about working with/merging with Community Engagement subcommittee as goals are similar.
 - v. Members who participated in discussion: Maggie, Vikram, Ryn, Pete and Druhv
 - vi. Future subcommittee meetings: Same as Community Engagement subcommittee?
If yes, first Tuesday of every month at 8:00pm, location TBD.
- b. Climate Sustainability
 - i. Point Person: Rhiannon (& Sarina)
 - ii. Goal: Small accessible ways to target realistically sized issues within a smaller environment.
 - iii. Action!
 - 1. Gain relationship with city officials to start advocating for change in Newton
 - 2. Get into regular contact with local organizations
 - 3. Weekly message spreading (consistent!)
 - 4. Educate! For community on a digestible level (workshops, volunteering, guest speakers)
 - iv. Initiative brainstorm
 - 1. Restaurant initiative
 - a. Discount for bringing your own containers?
 - 2. Ecobiodiversity topics (insects, plants)
 - 3. Get into kids' minds (elementary – pollinators!)

- 4. Composting! ❤️😊
- 5. Thrift store!
- 6. Mulch initiative
- 7. Kiddos: planting workshop
- v. To-do
 - 1. RELATIONSHIPS!
 - 2. Get started on thrift store!
 - a. Fashion Club 😊
- vi. Members who participated in discussion: Joya, Armine, Vikram, Maggie, Sarina, Kenneth
- vii. Future Subcommittee Meetings: Every second Thursday (1/18, 2/1, 2/15, 2/29...), location TBD
- c. Community Engagement
 - i. Point Person: Nick (& Emma)
 - ii. Goal: Foster a line/mode of communication with the city → specifically, city councilors, school committee.
 - 1. How to interact with them? Set-up meetings consistently
 - 2. What do we want to communicate? Specific topics
 - iii. Bring up events, encompass all subcommittee ideas → Bring up to city officials/meetings
 - iv. Newsletter: Add designated section for each subcommittee to put updates (post to Instagram as well), sections with city councilors
 - v. Survey → stakeholder groups in advisories, split up by grade.
 - vi. There was discussion about working with/merging with Community Engagement subcommittee as goals are similar.
 - vii. Members who participated in discussion: Spencer, Christian, Grace, Gassia, Pheobe
 - viii. Future subcommittee meetings: First Tuesdays of each month at 8:00pm, location TBD
- d. Bike Safety & Accessibility
 - i. Point Person: Sarina (& Shivani)
 - ii. Goal: Improve access to bikes and make bike routes safer in Newton
 - iii. Ideas: Hold bike drives → reuse old bikes
 - iv. *Ideas: Bike race with sponsors to raise money for improving bike lanes.

1. Local small businesses
2. Handout reflective shoelaces and other things (raffle)
3. Petition to have potholes filled
4. Partner with Green Newton
5. Hold an old helmet drive
6. Needs:
 - a. Publicity: Posters, signage
 - b. Small business outreach
 - c. Raffle (shoelaces)
 - d. Funding (from city?)
 - e. Determine race location
- v. Members who participated in discussion: Aanika, Sarina, Kenneth, Eitan, Josh
- vi. Future subcommittee meetings: Wednesday at 6:30pm once a month. Next meeting January 17th. Location TBD.

Closing

- I. Next meeting will be held on **Wednesday, February 14 at 6:30pm at the Newton Free Library**