



Fairfield CARES Community Coalition

Minutes

December 16, 2020

View a recording of the meeting on our [YouTube channel](#)

Welcome: Cristin McCarthy Vahey welcomed all to the meeting at 8:33am

Attendance:

Co-chair Cristin McCarthy Vahey (Government/State Rep, Parent)

Members: Colleen Ahmad (Youth Serving Org, Parent), Danielle Arias (The Hub), Wendy Bentivenga (Parent, Community Member), Leonora Campbell (Parent, Community Member), Tom Dorney (Community member/Veteran's Org), Philip Dwyer (Civic/Volunteer Org), Donna Fletcher (Health Care), Cathy Hazlett (Staff), Jennifer Hrbek (Substance Misuse Org), Jennifer Jacobsen (Government/BOE, Parent), Lisa Labella (Family Justice Center), Reini Knorr (Parent), Michelle McCabe (Parent/Community Org), Emily Melnick (Evaluator), Kayla Reiter (Substance Misuse Org), Alison Seyal (Government/Social Services, Parent), Livy Shah (youth), Pam Walker (School), Alida Ward (Co-Pastor Greenfield Hill Church), Margaret Watt (Substance Misuse Prevention Org), Nicole Wichowski (Substance Misuse Prevention Org), Noreen Wilpiseski (Youth Serving Org/Gov). () indicates community sector.

Approval of Minutes: Wendy Bentivenga made the motion to approve the November 18th Coalition Minutes and Jennifer Jacobsen seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Co-Chair Update: Cristin McCarthy-Vahey provided an update and wanted to commend Cathy for the phenomenal job she is doing in keeping things moving and that Superintendent, Michael Cummings is fully engaged and understanding the importance of this work and wanted the Coalition to know that FPS is fully prepared to provide whatever support is needed with the grant process.

Proposed Coalition Dates for 2021: 3rd Wednesday of each month 8:30-10:00am

1/20, 2/17, 3/17, 4/21, 5/19, 6/16, 7/21, 8/18, 9/22, 10/20, 11/17, 12/15 – Jen Jacobsen made the motion to accept the Coalition dates and tentative dates on the calendar for the 1st Monday's 8:30 and Leadership Executive committee meetings -Phil Dwyer seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Coalition Secretary Vacancy & Coalition Officers Announced:

The Coalition confirmed and adopted the leadership of the Fairfield CARES Coalition for the Town of Fairfield. There was discussion regarding a vacancy of the Secretary position.

Cristin McCarthy Vahey and Michael Cummings – Co-Chairs

Phil Dwyer – Resource Committee Chair

Reini Knorr – Programming Chair

Cathy Hazlett – Youth Committee Chair(interim)

Bernadette Coppola -Treasurer

Jen Jacobsen made the motion to accept confirmation of the Coalition Leadership and seconded by Reini Knorr. Leonora Campbell volunteered to be the Secretary and was added to the leadership team the motion was unanimously approved.

Nominating Committee Need to create committee of three to work on more intentional and needed, effort in recruitment which will allow for a sustainable coalition and leadership for the future. Lori and Coreen have expressed interest, please let Cathy or Cristin know if you are interested.

Coalition Goals Discussion – Cristin discussed the need for the Coalition to discuss goals and the fact we are dependent on grant funding resources.

Mission/Vision Statements & By-Laws Review – Phil provided an update regarding the committee's efforts and process – and everyone discussed thoughts regarding revisions and ideas to change to the initial effort.

By-Laws-Reviews

There will be a wider discussion before meeting in May and will need assistance with this discussion ahead of time.

Ongoing Grant Management

Cathy reviewed and need to be looking at

- a) current grant that supports her position that ends June 30th,
- b) applying for the Drugs Free Communities Act grant which is competitive and could start in Sept/Oct
- c) LPC (Local Prevention Coalition) Grant - eligibility legislature funds its annual non-competitive grant for free
- d) Fundraising efforts by the Coalition.

Ongoing Coalition Capacity Building

- a) Consistent Coalition membership recruitment – build out Parent volunteer involvement
- b) Build out the 12 sector responsibilities for the DFC Grant
- c) Need to Identify a Media Rep - E-Newsletter – Blog – Marketing firm – branding, info about the coalition Newspapers, Radio efforts If you have contacts please let Phil and Cathy know – company willing to do pro bono work – possible internships from SHU-Fairfield University
- d) Deliberate in bringing in all the local youth serving organizations in the community – exceptions and we need YMCA- Student Resource Officer from schools
- e) Need more parent representation from Middle school and High school
- f) Law Enforcement – would love more involvement

3-5 Year Strategic Plan

Cristin stated the coalition is driven by the activities that are required by the grants. We need to have a broader umbrella type of view and understanding of what it is we are hoping to accomplish as a Coalition in next 3-5 years grant or no grant. Providing this insight and for future planning of the Coalition, this in turn will be beneficial to community leadership bodies, funding resources and partnerships in the local, state national and federal levels to support our efforts.

Cathy suggested that we include that Strategic goals and objectives to a **Welcome Packet** to new members and local partnerships about who we are and to help them learn about what we do.

Phil suggests that the leadership formulate and work on the strategic plan and bring it forward. If it sees the need to ask or hear from 2-3 other voices to invite them to bring forward information they might want included.

Jen asked if a needs assessment was going to take place – review of demographics, populations, what has changed since the last assessment – look at the data and include it in evidence-based efforts and decide what needs to be done before we decide what to do?

Emily shared that within the focus groups with MS/HS students and parents – wealth of information. Much of this data is coming forward and it will be very resourceful. Especially learning how are people doing right now - their overall mental health and it can be certainly infused into the Goals and Objectives for the Strategic plan. Effects of COVID will linger on – academic and mental health are very evident and several years to remediate –

The Hub Update Daniella (filling in for Giovanna)

The office has a new America-Corp Member and new Intern, Dept of Public Health received a 5yr 3.5 mill year grant from the CDC for Suicide prevention efforts, Vaping - 101 presentation to 11 years and older and parents in New Canaan and Vaping message campaign with Pizza boxes with graphics.

Cristin thanked Wendy for helping get the LPC grant completed.

Cristin – discussed legislative work regarding Suicide prevention – she convened the CT Suicide Advisory Board and the Statewide Social/Emotional Learning Collaborative to talk about the upcoming efforts and what they can do and what needs to be done and help other groups to get done.

Margaret mentioned that an affiliate group in the region advisory board January 7th 12 noon – Cristin said let her know if you are interested.

Announcements from Coalition Members:

Reini wanted to give a shout out to the “Let’s Mention Prevention” Campaign local merchants raising awareness – inserts in the bags where you purchase alcohol – “**thank the vendor for positive efforts**” if you see it. Highlights social host laws and responsibilities. Please continue to follow social media – and support the media.

Emily – met with MS/HS students last week and MS parents – but they were also HS parents and will meet this week with more HS parents. Great time to connect with kids and parents – people are desperate and need that connection if you can try and do this, they will talk. Kids are trying to talk with their friends and be– agents of prevention among their friends and peers. She will have a more formal report in the new year – the evidence of what we are all talking about and hearing is there in the conversations.

Cristin – thanked Cathy for continuing the work that Jen started and to continue to gather the data and work with young people is so important and valuable.

Cathy - Shout out to Coreen, Alida for getting the news out to the youth for their help and the PTA/PTO’s for getting the parents to be involved in the focus groups.

Jen – Kudos to Cathy for coming before the BOE to pitch the survey and did a fabulous job, It was her 1st time and also presented the Mention Prevention efforts statewide group!!

Coreen – Cathy kudos – again for coming to Wakeman Torch club to share what is going on in the coalition and getting them involved in the surveys and mentioned that she has 200 students who need volunteer hours to complete virtually or in person. Any way they can help, please let Coreen know.

Margaret – Prevention Interns from Fairfield Ludlowe & Norwalk working with Positive Direction developed a mini social media campaign of selfcare tip of the day to get through the holidays in the morning and prevention selfcare tip of the day to get you through your evening safely and responsibly and making those good choices every day. **Stay healthy, Safe and Strong!!**

Cristin wanted to thank everyone for their consistent presence, commitment to this work, to each other and to the people in the community. It has just been a pleasure to be working with you and she *is very very grateful* that everyone is here and hope that 2021 bring us much more health and safety, prosperity, peace and joy and all the things that have been a bit of a struggle this year.

Adjournment: Phil Dwyer moved to adjourn the meeting and Reini Knorr seconded. Motion carried at 9:57am.

Respectfully submitted

Leonora P. Campbell
Secretary