

**MINUTES OF THE BERNARDS TOWNSHIP
MUNICIPAL ALLIANCE/YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION**

March 2, 2010
Bernards Township Municipal Building

Mayoral-Appointed Members Attending:

1. John Carpenter, Chair, Township Committee Rep.
2. Kathy Kelly, Bernards Township Health Dept., Vice Chair
3. Monique Loh, Citizen Rep., Secretary
4. Dorothy Schleifer, Substance Abuse Rep.
5. Lynn Evelyn, Citizen Rep.
6. Mary Jane Postal, Civic Group Rep.
7. Officer Tracy Alexander, Police Dept. Rep.
8. Officer David Martin, Police Dept. Rep.
9. Audrey Sherwyn, Board of Education Rep.
10. Dr. Barbara Bush, School District Rep.
11. Fr. Rick Morley, Clergy Rep
12. Lynn Mourey, PTO Rep.

Mayoral-Appointed Members Not in Attendance:

1. Bob Skea, Citizen Rep., Ridge Youth Sports
2. Ellie Todt, Senior Citizen Rep.

Other Attendees

1. Lucy Forgione, Bernards Township Health Dept.
2. Ronnie Weiner, Somerset County Alliance Coordinator
3. Chris Rose, Youth Services Commission
4. Nathan Susanj , Basking Ridge PATCH

Call to Order

John Carpenter called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m and all attendees stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Welcome and Reading of the Mission Statement.

John Carpenter read the Municipal Alliance’s mission statement: “The mission of the Bernards Township Municipal Alliance Against Substance Abuse is to provide consultation, programs, training and resources to members of the Bernards Township community with the goal of preventing and reducing the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.” The three goals of the Municipal Alliance are “ESP” – Educate the addicting and damaging effects of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs , Support events and

programs that provide alternatives to substance abuse and **P** provide a community wide presence in designing effective and measurable solutions.

Monique Loh did a roll call of mayoral appointed members. John asked if there were any public comments, and as there were none, proceeded to open the meeting. John asked for staff comments and there were none

Kathy Kelly handed out a copy of the press release that discussed the coalition members named to the Bernards Township Municipal Alliance Against Substance Abuse. Kathy will email a copy to each Alliance member.

Minutes for the February meeting were approved with the changes noted by Chris Rose.

Reports:

Kathy Kelly presented her Building Youth report as she had to leave the meeting early. The RAD students presented the anti-bullying skit to William Annin on 2/17 and it was well received. The RAD group is currently working with 5th graders to have them write letters to the seniors asking them not to drink and drive while attending the prom. The RAD group now wants to do something directed at parents as they have focused on students in the past. They want to create a skit, film it and post it on You Tube and possibly also post it in the District Friday folder. This is work in progress.

New Business:

1. Kathy Kelly and Lucy Forgione attended the CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America) National Leadership Forum that was recently held in Washington, DC in the second week of February. Unfortunately due to the snow in D.C. many of the presenters were unable to attend. However, Kathy was able summarize a lot of the information into three brochures which she handed out to the Alliance members. The brochures are: The Truth About Underage Drinking: Empowering Smart Decisions, The Truth About Marijuana: Empowering Smart Decisions, and The Truth About Prescription Drug Use: Empowering Smart Decisions. These brochures could be reproduced and handed out at various Municipal Alliance venues. Lucy and Kathy attended several workshops, including one that was focused on media and how to get information out to the public, social networking, etc.

Lucy Forgione handed out two pamphlets: Handbook for Community Anti-Drug Coalitions and The Coalition Impact: Environmental Prevention Strategies and asked that each member of the Municipal Alliance read and study the information presented in the material. Lucy stated that the power behind our organization is how organized we are. She said that the most important message that they got out of the meeting was that perseverance, hard work and communication are key accomplishing our goals.

2 a). **“Now You Know the Data, What’s Next?”** The top three problems that the Municipal Alliance will focus on are: Alcohol, Marijuana and Prescription Drug use as was agreed to in the February 2, 2010 meeting. There was general agreement that delaying the age of onset is a key focus area. John Carpenter suggested that there be presentations developed, appropriate by age group that deliver the same consistent message. It is important that we are all delivering the same message to the various groups with which each of us interacts.

Group Discussion – What are the Appropriate Age Groups? John asked the committee for suggested groupings. Lynn Mourey said that the PTO would take the message back to the schools. Monique Loh mentioned that she had asked Kathy Kelly to print out the latest information published by the Partnership for a Drug Free America with regard to its 2009 Partnership/MetLife Foundation Attitude Tracking Study (PATS). These results were released on March 2, 2010 and revealed that after a decade of consistent declines in teen drug abuse, the 2009 study showed upswings in the use of drugs and alcohol. The complete study should be available on the web site: www.drugfree.org Kathy handed out a summary of the study to the members in attendance. There was general agreement that it is important to have a consistent message. John asked Lucy and Kathy to develop a draft presentation that could be shared at the next meeting. The message needs to be relevant to the audience and we need to identify the age groups. We need to determine how we will measure success.

Tracy Alexander mentioned that D.A.R.E. was already being done with the 5th graders and she saw no need to go younger and that William Annin would be an appropriate place to start. Audrey Sherwyn mentioned that PUSH started in the 4th grade. Although D.A.R.E. is no longer offered separately at William Annin, the Health Curriculum for all grades does include discussions related to alcohol, tobacco, etc. usage and prevention. Lynn Evelyn mentioned that D.A.R.E. makes an impression on the 5th graders but that impression does not seem to be a lasting one once they reach William Annin and questioned why there is such a high rate of abuse when so much information has been covered in the curriculum. Chris Rose commented that it’s too bad that D.A.R.E. can’t be implemented as designed; in the 5th, 7th, 9th and 11th grades. Ronnie Weiner mentioned that a parental component is important. Tracy concurred, saying that many parents don’t even know that their kids are attending D.A.R.E. Part of the problem is that D.A.R.E. is not a consistent program; budget cutbacks have affected its implementation. There needs to be an age appropriate program; something that worked for 5th graders loses its relevance for kids once they enter WAMS. Lucy speculated that there are forces working against our society, e.g. the media, advertising, medical marijuana approval, etc. She believes that there is a need for a multidisciplinary approach that focuses on kids and parents, expectations and consequences.

Lynn Mourey suggested that we should group 6th and 7th graders together, 8th graders alone, 9th and 10th graders together and 11th and 12th graders together. She does not see 6th-8th as an age group together. John suggested that 8th and 9th graders be grouped together and receive the same information that would bridge the two groups. MJ Postal suggested that we include information as part of Freshman orientation.

Dorothy Schleifer supported the notion of consequences. She suggested that we ask the students what they think will happen based on their actions. Don't tell them what we want them to do but try to develop their capacity to think through the consequences of their actions. She suggested that 6th graders are a standalone group with 7th and 8th graders combined.

MJ Postal suggested that we use some of the data gathered from the breakout groups from the Youth Summit day. Lynn Evelyn stressed that interactive dialogue with the students is important – don't just show facts, need more scenario-based examples. We need to understand the student perspectives in order to know how to approach them. MJ suggested that we ask the kids what would prevent them from using alcohol and drugs. John suggested that we develop a question-based approach.

Ronnie Weiner mentioned Connie Green (works with St. Barnabas) who has a program that might be something we want to consider. Her program has a ladder of questions and what happens with each successive rung. She is going to invite her to attend one of our upcoming meetings so that we can hear that her programs offer. She said her approach is fantastic.

Lucy suggested that perhaps we could host a panel of savvy 12th graders who could be asked questions and have other kids learn from them. Perhaps we could ask the SACs at the high school for suggested participants.. John said that the panel sounded interesting and could complement the work that we are doing but that we still needed a consistent message. MJ reiterated that interaction with the kids is key. She suggested that we should ask the kids that if you could tell your parents what would help them to get through high school, what would it be. Then perhaps we could have a subsequent parent session, based on what the kids are telling us. John wants the Municipal Alliance to focus on developing a consistent message so that when parents attend PTO meetings, Board of Education meetings, etc. there is a consistency in the messages that they are hearing. Audrey wanted to know when the last Student Stressor was done and Lucy provided the information that it was done about 5 years ago and was separately designed and funded. Kathy mentioned that the parent message could be a good place to start and should focus on delaying the age of first use and why it is important to delay the onset. Parents need to understand the consequences to their children, e.g. their healthy, legal consequences, college applications, permanent records, etc. Dorothy suggested that if we can make an impression on their consciousness the physical, mental, psychological, etc impacts from initiating this behavior. Lynn Mourey questioned what is an age appropriate message, i.e. at what age can they understand the type of message. Tracy mentioned that young kids don't necessarily make a conscious choice about what they want to do. John suggested that we need some professional expertise, e.g. Dr Bush. John asked those Municipal Alliance members who do have the professional expertise, to help the committee determine what the age appropriate messages are. Father Morley mentioned that 5th graders are scared by D.A.R.E. but that older kids are more savvy and see that lives haven't ended when someone uses alcohol and drugs. Is this a question of risk

assessment and risk management? Lucy questioned that so much focus has been on the education of students but is there a larger issue as to the education of the parents?

Lynn Evelyn said that communication with parents is critical. Monique Loh wanted to know if there were programs available where kids talk to kids about experiences and consequences. Dorothy mentioned a program where adolescents were paired with parents (not their own) and talked about the issues that they were confronting. This program is similar to the neighborhood coffees.

Kathy and Lucy will develop a draft for the alliance focused on messaging to parents.

2 b) How do we measure our results? John suggested 100% as a target and asked committee members for their opinions. Ronnie wanted to know how to you measure this and what is the baseline? There was debate about what the 100% really means – is it 100% of the population, is it 100% of the communication vehicles, etc. John stated that it was a goal that we reach 100% of the population in Basking Ridge. Dorothy Schleifer made a motion that we adopt the 100% which was seconded. However, there was not unanimous agreement that this was a target that was specific and measurable. Dr. Bush suggested that if our goal was to delay the onset by 1 year, this is a measurable objective. Monique suggested that another way of measuring success was to identify a specific number of communication venues that exist in town, then target 100% of these venues. If we produce touch points to every single one of these venues, then this is a measurable objective. Because we do not know if 100% of the eligible population, e.g. subscribes to the District Folders and reads them, it would be impossible to measure if we have reached 100% of this population. Ronnie cautioned the group to be mindful that numbers will be challenged and that we need to be able to substantiate our findings. No conclusion was reached after this discussion and this will remain an open topic that will be discussed further at the next meeting.

3. Twilight Challenge – Lucy passed around a draft flyer for the event. Flyer needs to be tweaked a bit. June 6th (Sunday) – This is the only fundraiser that is done. Bob Skea will help with planning for the event while all Municipal Alliance members will help support it.

4. Library Resource Center – Lucy met with the Bernards Township library (Ann Meany) to discuss identifying and having a dedicated space for resources that the Municipal Alliance has provided to the library. While the library will not provide a dedicated space, they are happy to have a display table a couple of times of year alerting parents about the resources that are available. Lynn Mourey wanted to know if the library would consider doing a book of the month club for the Municipal Alliance. Lucy thought that this might be doable. Lucy and Lynn Mourey will meet further to discuss. Lucy will also be meeting with the members of the other sub-committees.

Old Business:

1. AAI presentation at Delbarton will be held on March 6th. Municipal Alliance members are invited to attend. Presentation is geared towards the athletes.

Reports:

1. Ronnie Weiner – Somerset County Alliance Coordinator – Nothing new – no letter of agreement from the state has been received yet. Nothing has been moved or discussed. April is usually when they start working on the next renewal.
2. Chris Rose – Youth Services Commission – the Somerset County Alliance and the Youth Services commission are collaborating on a presentation called “21 Saves Lives” which will be held on April 27th at Somerset Vo-Tech from 7-9 pm. Pam Fisher who is the Director of the NJ Division of Highway Traffic Safety and she will discuss how the changing the legal drinking age to 21 has decreased the number of accident fatalities. The Freeholders have not indicated when they will be adopting the budget either. She has received verbal assurances that the money is in the budget. The Commission will be hosting a workshop on Building and Using Grant toolbox – New Ways to Support Your Programs The office of Youth Services will be visiting Ridge HS, thanks to Dr Bush to discuss Family Crisis Intervention and programs that are offered. They will be meeting with the Crisis Management teams. The Youth Services Commissions has also received a grant from the county in partnership with Central NJ Health Consortium to hire 3 parent educators who will work with families with pre-natal to 3 year olds who are referred through a variety of sources within the county. Chris will send Lucy the information in the event that there are families who could utilize this services. There is a bilingual educator. At the April meeting, the grant application needs to be discussed.

Member comments:

1. Monique Loh – picture needed to be taken of the Municipal Alliance members for posting. Picture was taken and emailed to Kathy Kelly. Also wanted to know the status of Girls on Track. Lucy mentioned that three people had volunteered and that Kathy was interviewing them.
2. MJ Postal – still working with William Annin on the garden project. MJ reiterated how important Father Morley’s connections to the Youth Groups are. MJ also would like input for the Ridge HS table
3. Tracy Alexander – Police Academy is coming up in July and it gives any students 9-12 to get some education about fire safety, narcotics etc. Tracy can get the information to anyone who might be interested. This information will be posted in the Friday folder.
4. Lynn Mourey – would like to invite the PTO presidents to the next meeting so that they have some ownership in what the Municipal Alliance is doing. Audrey and Lynn will coordinate. They will also be sure to include St. James. They will be invited to attend the next Municipal Alliance meeting. A bigger room will have to be found for the next meeting.

5. Dr. Bush – at some future meeting, it would be nice to invite someone from the Rowan College – Social Norms group. Ronnie Weiner will call someone at Rowan College
6. Lucy Forgione – in response to the question about touching base with Municipal Alliances in towns with similar demographics, the following members will reach out to the other towns:

Franklin, Somerset Hills, Manville – Lynn Evelyn
Watchung – Audrey
Hillsboro – MJ
Montgomery – Father Morley

Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm

Next Meeting: April 6 2010

Respectfully submitted,

Monique Loh
Secretary