

Minutes of the Bernards Township Municipal Alliance /Youth Services Commission

September 7, 2021

Mayoral-Appointed Members Attending

Joan Harris, Chair, Township Committee Representative
Kaitlin Cartoccio, Vice Chair, Health Department Representative
Jennifer Korn, BOE Representative
Monica Sprague, Youth Services Commission
Madison Clowes, Student Representative
Phil Jasina, Bernards Township Police Department
Ellen Houlihan, Civic Group Representative

Other Attendees

Gabriel Troconis – LMTI Attendee
Caroline White – LMTI Attendee
Karen White – LMTI Parent Attendee

Members Not Attending

Robert Green – Clergy Representative
MJ Postal - Senior Citizen Representative
Rebecca Tritt - Ridge High School SAC, School Representative
Cathy Phillips - Substance Abuse Representative
Swapna Uradi - PTO Representative
Cindy Fleischer - Citizen Representative (BRMA)
Tracy Baldassare - Bernards Township Police Department

Call to Order

Kaitlin Cartoccio called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM. Attendees stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement was read by Joan Harris. 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.

Three goals of the Alliance: ESP!

1. To **Educate** about the damaging effects of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs,
2. To **Support** events & programs that provide healthy alternatives to substance abuse, and
3. To create community wide **Presence** in the identification of problems and in designing effective measurable solutions.

Staff Comment

Kaitlin Cartoccio informed the group that Jennifer Sorensen resigned in order to take a social worker job. She will be greatly missed and was wished good luck at her new job. A new coordinator will be starting in September.

Minutes Approval

No Quorum (tabled)

Reports

Somerset County Alliance Coordinator – (TBD)

- No Report

Youth Services Commission –(Monica Sprague)

- Reiterated that Jennifer Sorenson will be missed.
- Nothing new to share from the County
- Applications for the 2021-2022 Annual Competitive Grants were sent out. The deadline is October 6, 2021. There were no modifications for the new grant. Timeline is 1/1/2022-12/31/2021 – not yet moving back to the August timeline because of the pandemic.
- Can apply for the same program (Grab and Go) for two years. There may be an exception because of the pandemic if deemed necessary.

Community Program Coordinator – (Kaitlin Cartoccio)

- LMTI (see below)
- Take Vape Away Grant – get speaker
- Some fall programming on hold because of the pandemic
- Perhaps REACH can go to back to school night – if it is in-person
- Teen Volunteer Fair – spoke to the library, not sure if there are any groups to participate, or volunteers willing with the pandemic. It is a concern because of some of the older people that are usually involved. Hope to bring it back in 2022, usually 100 students and families involved.
- Empowerment Day (WAMS) – still trying to figure out assemblies in the fall. Usually a great event with some LMTI speakers.
- Pride Survey – was asked if it can be done by the end of 2021. Last survey was 2019 (all on-line) Over a few days in English Class at the HS, In the Character Education class at WAMS.
- Dr. Lazovick reached out and we may be able to hold programming during the longer lunch at RHS. Perhaps some programming for welcome week and student wellness.
- Teen Mental Health First Aid is taking off and offering funding for schools who want it.

Agenda Items

1. **REACH (Ridge Education Action & Community Health)**

- **LMTI –**

- 2 days of in-person for REACH (taking part in a virtual day together), and two virtual days
- 26-27 people involved. 15 Freshman, , 5 YACS (Youth Advisory Council) and 1 CATS (College Age TI Staff) and 5 returning students
- 20 people went to the in-person at the camp. They worked on Action Group Programming, which is for the local community (post-it notes with what you like in town; what you want to change – ie: Drinking and Drug use, mental health, etc.), team building and getting to know each other. There were speakers (Sean O’Beirne) I Am Lovable and Capable (IALAC) and Kevin Wanzer.
- The next day was virtual on PheedLoop, there was a photo booth, resources, interactive agendas for both students and adults. Had Process Groups, which included students from all different towns.
- Kaitlin had students where matching t-shirts to keep the connection while in-person and virtual. Came up with a Zone of Focus after sorting the post-it notes mentioned above.
- 3rd day was virtual. Melissa (CAT) helped the group in workshops and process groups.
- 4th day was in-person for REACH at the Community Center, they participated in the on-line program together. The theme was rebuilding.
- The group was awarded the top action group award for 2020-2021 – The Lindsay Rose Meyer Memorial Prevention Award. It’s a very big honor and reflects the groups’ hard work and dedication.
- The REACH leadership (YACs) did a great job even though it was not what was expected during this difficult year.
- Madison Clowes (Co-President) broke down some areas of focus with the action plan:
 - Drinking and Drug Use – Empower students with on-line messaging
 - Mental Health – host a booth to hand out information
 - LGBTQ+ - teacher training on pronouns etc.
 - Environmental problems – clean up days in town, etc.
 - Reducing risky behavior
- Caroline White and Gabriel Troconis attended and said the program was surprising and enjoyable. The speakers were engaging and inspiring.

- **Grab and Go Team Outreach**

- Rachel Talbert (the teen librarian) is the programs mastermind. Used it as a way to reach the teens during the pandemic. The competitive grant application and eventual awarding of \$3,500, grew out of a collaboration with the Municipal Alliance for “Winter Break Bags”.
- 1 bag/month with different themes. 45/50 bags pick up by teens
- Would like to reapply for funding and expand into in-person speakers and projects. Purchase some equipment, 1e: a button maker. Hoping for October to be in-person.
- Its an extremely successful program

- 2. **Fall Program Ideas**

- Hoping to do programs in person, not sure anyone is interested in virtual programming anymore.
- Try to come up with ideas at the next meeting

- 3. **Subcommittees Update – Joan Harris**

- RHS Booth –No Updates
- Fundraising/Twilight Challenge –Kaitlin is determined to have the challenge in June 2022
- Mental Health –no update

Public Comment

None

Local Events/Municipal Alliance Member Comment

- Phil Jasina said he hoped once students are back, people will see all its ok and be open to more programs (ie: Twilight Challenge 5K)
- Joan Harris mentioned the Community in Crisis Survey and that they would like to come to the next meeting to discuss results.
- Kaitlin mentioned the Statement of Interest will go out to members to see if they want to stay involved and will be looking to fill vacancies.

Next meeting date is Tuesday, October 5th

Adjournment –6:48

Motion 1-Jen Korn
 2-Kaitlin Cartoccio

Respectfully Submitted,
Jen Korn, *Secretary*