

HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING OF FEBRUARY 14, 2017

ATTENDANCE:

COMMISSIONERS: Bob Galan, Dick Sallick, Yvonne Senturia, Peter Powell, Lee Bollert, Claudia Coplen, and Ken Bernhard

Staff: Sarah Heath, Elaine Daignault, Kristen Witt, Sue Pfister

Guests: Harold and Bernicestine Bailey

Minutes: The minutes of January 10, 2017 were approved.

Guest Speaker: Harold Bailey, Chair, Team Westport

Harold gave a brief history of TEAM Westport which begun as a task force thirteen years ago by Diane Farrell to examine the issue of diversity in our town. After study and consultation, the Task Force recommended to overcome the limited diversity that exists in our schools and community and to which our children are exposed. An ongoing need exists for a proactive effort to make diversity a part of how the town of Westport works. In 2005 the Task force was made a Town Committee and over the years it has sponsored many events and initiatives toward this end.

In 2010 a yearly essay contest open to any student from Westport in grades 9-12 was instituted. This past September a subcommittee began to search for this year's subject and worked with high school social studies and English teachers. White Privilege was selected as the essay subject. Controversy erupted after a distorted newspaper article wrote of "town outrage over challenge" which went viral. Harold outlined the TEAM's response which included a careful review of its procedures, the distribution of fact sheets, as well as media interviews. He also appeared and was interviewed on the Michael Smerconish program and will be again after this year's award is announced on April 3rd. Discussion followed including how to manage the announcement of the 2017 winner. It was **moved and seconded** that HSC prepare a press release supporting the endeavor and this was passed unanimously.

New Business:

Budget Planning FY-18

Sarah reported that two reviews of the budget have been held and that a meeting with the Board of Finance is scheduled. At present a 2% decrease is proposed and has been met with a favorable response. The level of state funding which can be expected remains unclear.

Transportation - Door to Door

The Westport Transit District has put out an RFP for door to door services for seniors and persons with disabilities. Levels of service, e.g., wheel chair capability and cost effectiveness were discussed.

Old Business:

Mental Health Breakfast

A good and enthusiastic turnout heard Margaret Watt of the RMHB address trends in mental health in Connecticut. Access to Care, limited by few providers who accept insurance, and increasing prevalence of mental health problems pose a major concern.

CSA Enhancement and Expansion

Sue reported that application will be filed shortly with the P and Z and noted the importance for support at upcoming meetings. A budget of \$3.9 million will limit expansion of the footprint and

site work and additional parking will be major costs. Improvements include updating mechanicals, showers and lockers for exercising and sheltering and addressing the entrance door problem. A state bonding request is being considered.

Department Report:

Energy Assistance is operating within budget, warm up funds are kicking in and some surplus funding from last year remains available.

AARP Tax Assistance Program is heavily utilized operating at Town Hall and at the WCSA on different days.

Respectfully submitted, Dick Sallick