

Westport Youth Commission

March 17, 2011 Meeting Minutes

Present: Ned Batlin, Will Bitsky, Rebecca Bregman, Emily Cooper, Bobbi Crocker, Elaine Daignault, Sereniti Dobson, Brandon Edelson, Matt Fitter, Vicki Katz, Rose Levenson, Hannah Lewis, Jaina Lewis, James Manning, Maggie Mudd, Debbie Rath, Leigh Rubin, Doug Russ, Neva Sanfillippo, PJ Syrrist, Dan Woog

Absent: Michael Argosh, Terry Bernard, Emily Cooper, Victoria Engh, Erin Gandelman, Marianne Goodell, Rita Hulme, Farrell Levenson, Julie Mombello, Andy Moss, Isaac Stein, Anna Violette, & Sascha Tergis

Guest: Ronald Weimer, YMCA Westport

I Minutes from February 17, 2011 meeting approved in motion by Rosie and seconded by Ned.

II. YMCA: Ronald Weimer

The YMCA is trying to be more relevant to kids. The purpose of Ron Weimer's visit was to hear from Westport teens how that could be done. Some of the suggestions included:

- O offer more recreational sports activities, especially on weekends;
- O examples: volleyball, fencing, duckpins, billiards, paintball;
- O offer quicker transportation to Y from the schools during the week;
- O offer recreational/social mix options

Mr. Weimer commented that his research of other Y programs successful in attracting teen participation showed that the quality of the Y teen director was pivotal.

III. What's Up?

- Rosie said seniors have voted on nominees for senior superlatives in the yearbook.
- Neva reported that "Varsity Vogue," a fund-raiser organized by the Staples cheerleading squad, will be held at Mitchell's on March 18. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$5 for students. Proceeds will go to St. Vincent's Hospital. More can be learned

at staplescheerleading.com

- Will and Brett reported on the panel discussion about the film, "Race to Nowhere," held on March 14. TAG played an important role. Regrettably, most of the discussion was about the admissions process rather than about all the concerns raised in the film. About 80 people attended, including about 20 kids. Brett said the best part was when the kids spoke. Chris Lemone has instituted a blog (tagrtn.com) to talk about initiatives that could be taken arising out of the discussion of the film-e.g. how to limit the amount of homework. Participants can remain anonymous.
- Will reported that TAG kids have been helping out with DARE presentations in the elementary schools. Younger kids really identify with the high school kids.
- Will also bemoaned the loss of Arena, commenting that kids have different learning styles and know with which teachers they learn best. Removing choice in the selection of teachers is a negative development.

Committee Reports:

- Westport Cinema Initiative:
 - Brandon asked students and adults to help the advertising campaign led by Doug Tirola by participating in a discussion Brandon is video-ing, answering the questions, "What do you miss about not having a cinema in Westport?" and, "What was a memorable moment for you in the movies?"
 - The big launch at the Playhouse, on March 26, is shaping up. Free Willy Wonka candy bars will be handed out to kids who come to see "Willy Wonka;" the Director of "Wasteland" may be at the Playhouse; several area restaurants will be trying to duplicate the meals shown in "Big Night;" teen docents are needed for the 10 p.m. performance of "The Texas Chain Saw Massacre." The WYC should have a visible presence. Lisa Marriott is in charge of staffing screenings.
 - \$26,000 of the \$50,000 goal has been raised.
 - The 11 p.m. teen driving curfew was raised as a barrier to full teen participation at the 10 p.m. performance. The Chief of

Police is being petitioned to permit later teen driving on this night.

- Brett encouraged everybody to Friend the Westport Cinema Initiative on Facebook and suggest/share with their own networks of friends.
- Finally, Brandon said there is a debate within the Initiative regarding what kind of cinema Westport wants: like the Avon, in Stamford (mostly art house films, mainly appealing to adults) or like the Community, in Fairfield (mostly second runs of popular films, mainly appealing to kids)? He urged kids to get involved in this debate.
- Working with Parks and Rec:
 - Will mentioned the volleyball tournament that will be arranged by WYC during "Castles in the Sand" at Compo Beach.
 - Arranging ski outings will have to wait until next year; in the meantime, the group will find out more about Fairfield's successful program.
 - Bobbi reminded the group that even though Parks and Rec is not interested in arranging more rec basketball, impromptu basketball games-"flash mob basketball"- probably could be arranged by the kids themselves through Facebook.
- Youth Advocacy:
 - Hannah said the group needs to meet again but they have made some inroads to begin talking to 8th graders about high school. The last committee meeting was cancelled, so the report was short.
- iMentor:
 - Neva reported that the ADL has been awarded a grant from ATT to train students in anti-bullying curriculum called Cyber-Ally. The training opportunity can be for a full or a half-day (3 hours) and can be tailored to our needs and perhaps be offered to new students who will join the iMentor team next fall. More details will follow but this will most likely occur in the Spring as a supplement to existing certifications from iSafe America.

- iMentor was invited to speak to parents at Long Lots on internet issues affecting elementary students, such as stealing passwords and impersonating students online. Elaine was not available on the proposed date but if there is another opportunity, the iMentors will create a presentation for this group.
- Sereneti mentioned that most elementary school abuse on the internet is female. Ned commented it was a shame that the bullying lesson was cut from the DARE program when the problem continues to crop up in new and different forms.
- The results of a survey of participants in iMentor's presentation at Bedford revealed very favorable results, with a large majority indicating they had learned something new.

. Youth and Police Program:

- Serenti reported that they have met twice with high school students interested in the panel and once with middle school students. The middle school kids all were boys. The grant requirements require a community service project which could include raising money for charity or a hands on project. The program also might involve a junior police academy and sporting events involving the police.
- Ned reported that the high school kids requested that the police occasionally meet them for lunch at Staples. Ned said a student said, "We want to humanize you!" Unfortunately, the school administration will not allow it at this time but stay tuned for updates.

. Old/New Business

None.

. Adjournment

Will made a motion, all agreed.

Submitted by Maggie Mudd.

The next meeting is Thursday, April 14, 2011. Check email for committee meetings during the month.