

CITY OF NORWALK
COMMUNITY SERVICES & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
BY VIDEO CONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE
July 30, 2020

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Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via e-mail in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Lamond Daniels at ldaniels@norwalkct.org to provide written comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Barbara Smyth, Chair; Greg Burnett; Dominique Johnson; Tom Keegan; Kadeem Roberts; David Heuvelman

STAFF: Lamond Daniels, Chief of Community Services; Ray Burney, Director of Personnel; Attorney Brian Candela, Assistant Corporation Counsel

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Ms. Smyth called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was no public comments this evening.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES- FROM MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 19, 2020

On page 1, under discussion Change “Smith” to “Smyth”

****MR. BURNETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. DISCUSSION

Ms. Smyth congratulated Mr. Daniels on the birth of his son.

a. Updates- Community Services Department

Mr. Daniels provided a status update on the Community Services Department and said he is proud to say that because of the restructuring and the development of his department it has positioned the city to be an active player on what is happening as it impacts Norwalkers. He said while Covid-19 has hit our community hard it has also galvanized the community from a social service perspective to come together and he acknowledged the non-profit and social services organizations throughout our city who have been doing a phenomenal job with the capacity and resources they have to respond and help our community. He said his goals are to unify the initiatives and programs that affect the social well-being of our residents, and also provide oversight to the city departments that are under the Community Services umbrella, and identify the resources and opportunities to respond strategically to the emerging needs. He said he did a listening tour when he came on board with the Executive Directors and leaders of community groups and one of the things they had identified as a need was that help with coordinating and bring folks to the table and that is exactly what we are doing. He said he is proud to announce that they have completed the virtual interviews for the Director of Human Services and he is hoping to make an offer to one of the candidates very soon

Mr. Daniels said that there is data available in the city that is accurate and reliable and presented a map that identified where the food insecurities gaps are in the city, and it is important as he continues to evolve and shape his department that they look at and be informed by the data and how to deploy and identify resources and work with the non-profit organizations. He said based on the map provided by Norwalk Acts his department was able to partner with the Norwalk Public Schools to identify where the best locations are to open up the food sites and the need is still there. He said he had asked that the non-profits to provide him with their experiences and Person to Person has reported that because of Covid-19 they have seen a 50% increase in demand for rental assistance and each week are serving between 150-200 people asking for food. He said the Salvation Army has estimated that they have seen a 35% to 40% increase in the demand for food and the Open Door Shelter has seen a 30% increase in the demand for food. He said they all report the challenges with staffing and volunteers and they are doing well but there is always a need for volunteers and the organizations rely on a strong volunteer base to help with their bottom line. He said he is very proud that through our Emergency Response Team there is a strong volunteer program so the city has been able to deploy volunteers for many of the organizations.

Mr. Daniels reported on the food distribution and said since the pandemic his office initiated the first food delivery program and partnered with Alliance for Community Empowerment and since the program has started in March have served 175 families and 553 individuals. He said they also receive a lot of goals from funders asking how they can help and on average through the relationship with funders have been able to help the Blessed Box Program with \$50,000 in grant funding outside of private donor support. He said since they have started over 200 boxes of food have come through the city and each box can feed a family up to three people for three to four days and has been calculated to over 70,000 pounds of food have been brought into the city just from this one program. He said he is also proud to partner with the Norwalk Public Schools and for the month of June they served 76,492 breakfast meals to residents and 77,690 meals for lunch. He acknowledged his team and Darlene Young and the Fair Rent department has been a key player in helping to navigate the players and she has taken a leadership role.

Mr. Daniels said that his office orchestrated and organized the Connecticut Food Bank in May and served over 2000 cars and acknowledged the city departments, and the Connecticut Food Bank has informed him that this was the largest they have done in the state in many years and they said it was one of the most organized events.

Mr. Daniels said each week he has a senior services call because we need to know what is happening with the senior population and that is an area that he want to pay special attention to in moving forward, and his goal is to not only ensure all populations are served but that the city knows who they are and where assistance can be provided.

Mr. Daniels provided an overview on the departments that he oversees and said the Health Department has been very busy and continue to stay very active in data analysis and daily contact tracing and also continue to provide education and awareness. He said they are also doing the enforcement and have been very active in the dining enforcement as well as heath inspections. He said they are also thinking about critical clinical pieces back online by appointment only.

Mr. Daniels said that Youth Services said that families are responding very well to the video conferencing and the Juvenile Review Board is still taking referrals. Ms. Smyth asked if there has

been any affect due Covid-19 in kids getting into trouble during the pandemic. Mr. Daniels said that the numbers have decreased but that doesn't mean that the need is not there and the issue is the school is usually the number one reporter.

Mr. Daniels said the Library is currently not open but last month we have initiated the curbside book service and over 1600 books have been checked out. There is also a live reference support call in service and have also increased all of the online services. He said the Pop-Up Library has been visiting the high need food sites and have given out over 1500 free books to date and because of Covid-19 have issued over 20,000 library cards.

Mr. Daniels said if a resident is unsure about their rights they should look on the city's website and call Human Relations and Fair Rent and there is a live person available to help them through the process.

Ms. Smyth thanked Mr. Daniels for the presentation and it really shows how much Norwalk needed this department and how much he is the right person to coordinate the services and he has done a remarkable job.

b. Equity and Justice for All Commission

Mr. Daniels provided an update on the Equity and Justice for all commissions and said they will be developing a commission of local leaders and community member's representative of Norwalk who are dedicated to education, dialogue and actions surrounding race and ethnicity that will effect change. He said they will be using the 1993 Blue Ribbon Report on Race Relations as the template and will be building awareness, solutions and direction for racial justice and equity by generating transformative ideas, solutions and practices. He said as of yesterday the RFP was launched and will close on August 11, 2020. He said they are in the process of identifying a selection committee and Ms. Smyth has been selected and will be representing the Common Council. Ms. Smyth asked who will comprise the seven panel committee. Mr. Daniels said they will be asking the NAACP, The IMF, Norwalk Acts, The Connecticut Youth Leadership, and Leader from the Hispanic Latino Community and the Board of Education to offer a representative. Ms. Smyth asked how long of a period of time once the consultant has been hired will they be facilitating this commission. Mr. Daniels said the current proposal reads a one year contract.

Mr. Daniels reminded the public about the volunteer survey that is available on line and said they are always looking for volunteers. He said if you want to know what the community organizations are to please visit www.norwalkct.org/citynews.

**5. EXECUTIVE SESSION- DISCUSSION REGARDING APPLICATION FOR BENEFIT
UNDER PUBLIC ACT 19-111.**

- ** MR. KEEGAN MOVED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Executive session began at 7:50PM.
Executive session ended at 8:28PM.
There were no motions were made and no votes were taken.

6. ADJOURN

- ** MR. ROBERTS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:28PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd
Telesco Secretarial Services