

**CITY OF NORWALK  
PUBLIC SAFETY AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON  
COUNCIL  
MAY 26, 2022**

Attendance: Jenn McMurrer, Chair; Dominique Johnson; Thomas Keegan; Diana Revolus; Heidi Alterman (arrived at 7:14PM); Barbara Smyth; Josh Goldstein; Tom Keegan (arrived at 8:32PM)

Staff: Michele DeLuca, Deputy Director Emergency Management; Susan Zecca, Deputy Police Chief; Lamond Daniels, Chief, Norwalk Community Services; Ana Vivian Estrella, Norwalk Community Services; Theresa Argondezzi, Norwalk Health Department; Gino Gatto, Fire Chief

Others: James Martinez, Norwalk Public Schools; Denique Weidema-Lewis, Norwalk ACTS; Margaret Watt, Positive Directions; Diamond Sead, Human Services Council; Kara Nelson Beakey, Board of Education

**I. WELCOME AND ROLL CALL**

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

**II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- 3/24/22**

**\*\* MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION- MR. GOLDSTEIN**

**III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no public comments this evening.

**IV. NEW BUSINESS**

**POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO ATT&T  
FLEET COMPLETE UNDER NASPO PRICING FOR EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES OF  
FLEET COMPLETE FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$73,000 OVER THREE YEARS.  
ACCOUNT 09213610-5777**

Deputy Chief Zecca said historically the police department has been having some issues with the AVL system for the vehicles and after much research have decided on Fleet Complete as the system to move forward, and the Fire Department as well as the Department of Public Works have already moved to Fleet Complete for their AVL. Ms. Johnson asked if this is a one-time expense or an annual expense. Deputy Chief Zecca said this is a three-year contract.

**\*\* MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**2. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR HARRY W. RILLING, TO SIGN ANY AND ALL AGREEMENTS, DOCUMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS WITH VIGILANT SOLUTIONS, LLC. FOR THE SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE OF VIGILANT INVESTIGATIVE DATA PLATFORM ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION NOT TO EXCEED \$25,000 ANNUALLY. ACCOUNT# 013030-5235**

Deputy Chief Zecca said the police department currently uses the license plate readers system with Vigilant Solutions and this item it to expand the capabilities and is an investigation platform that will allow them to research the commercial data that is put into the system that they currently do not have access to.

**\*\* MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Goldstein in the past week he did a ride along with the police department and complimented on the absolute professionalism and was a very impressive experience and looks forward to a future ride along.

Ms. McMurrer said she also did a ride along with the police department yesterday and she rode along with Officer Prada and could not have been more impressed by her. She said they had two very difficult calls and said the officers in the department are amazing and thanked them for everything they do.

Ms. Revolus thanked the police department for having officers finally step out of their cars and interacting with the kids at the bus stops.

Deputy Chief Zecca said she appreciates the praise for the department and there are a tremendous number of great officers and are doing a hard job every day.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**1. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING TO SIGN AN INFORMATION SHARING AND ACCESS AGREEMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS)/FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (FEMA) TO ACCESS NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE CLAIMS DATA FOR NORWALK.**

Ms. Deluca said this is to collect the data from the claims that have been submitted by Norwalk residents over the past few years, and the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA want memorandum of agreements signed with the municipalities saying how the information will be used. She said the information will not be shared and they can request data multiple times over the three-year period and is a

standard agreement to get the data. She said part of the benefit is seeing what claims have been made and may open doors for other mitigation programs. Mr. Goldstein asked how long the MOU will last or will it be revisited a point to be determined. Ms. Deluca said it is a two-year period. Mr. Goldstein asked what if something happens before it is signed and if the MOU can be backdated to give access even if it has not been fully executed. Ms. Deluca said she will investigate that.

**\*\* MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **V. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **DISCUSSION W/ COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL ABOUT MENTAL HEATH RESOURCES AVAILABLE AROUND THE CITY AND THE SCHOOL DISTRICT.**

- Lamond Daniels- Chief, Norwalk Community Services
- Ana Vivian Estrella- Norwalk Community Services
- Theresa Argondezzi- Norwalk Health Department
- James Martinez-Norwalk Public Schools
- Denique Weidema-Lewis- Norwalk ACTS
- Margaret Watt- Positive Directions
- Diamond Sead- Human Services Council

Ms. McMurrer said it is mental heath awareness month and mental health is something that is dealt with all the time not just one month of the year and Council member Johnson and herself thought it would be important to do something that would educate the public on what resources are available both on the city side and the school district side because mental health affects so many people. She said they have gathered a dynamic team and she is looking forward to what everyone has to say.

Ms. Johnson said this came out of community members reaching out and the focus is how to connect them with resources and thanked the counterparts from the Board of Education and said it is phenomenal to have the cross conversations and have incredible members of city staff.

Mr. Daniels said the goal is to raise awareness about the services within the district, the city, and the community and provide information on how to access these important resources. We know that effective collaboration between the school mental health professionals and the community mental health partners only broadens the availability of support and enhances the overall access to mental health care in our community. The Community Services department is here to help facilitate and promote mental health awareness, but also reduce the stigma, and our country is grieving right now from two tragic mass shootings and our prayers go out to the victims, families, friends, and all those that played a role to help to get children and staff to get home safely. The assumption that the acts of mass violence are primarily driven by mental illness is not true and there are many complicated factors and blaming mental illness is something we should not do, and it inflicts a damaging stigma on the millions of people who suffer from mental illness because we know the vast majority of who are struggling are not violent. He said if anyone is impacted or struggling that they are not alone and there is help.

Mr. Martinez said in June 2021, a youth survey was conducted and over 2500 students participated in the survey and provided a snapshot of what has been happening over the last few years. Ms. Watt presented and the results of the survey and said that 73% found the pandemic very or somewhat stressful, and a

large proportion reported an impact on their relationship. She said in terms of mental health that 39% of students from 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade reported depression and the numbers are much higher when compared to pre-Covid, and 13% of the kids reported that they had seriously contemplated suicide during the preceding 12 months and 6% reported that they had attempted it, and the LGBTQ highest risk group. She said in the work that they have been doing through the Norwalk partnership and in collaboration with Norwalk ACTS have been putting together models and plans to support the highest risk groups and she is happy to say that Positive Directions and Youth Business Institute applied and received an ARPA grant to address some of these target populations.

Mr. Martinez shared the resources that are available and have developed an opportunity where he is able to partner with a host of providers that he meets with monthly and will continue to help more and more kids.

Ms. Sead said due to the partnership met with some of the school providers to make the referral process smoother for all the services and were able to increase the communication with each other, so a lot of the mental health providers are connecting more to be sure the services are not overlapping. She said due to the ARPA funding they will be able to see kids this year over the summer as well as afterhours rather than waiting for the next school year.

Ms. Estrella said the family navigator partnership with the school system was originated during the peak of COVID to create connectivity and wanted to be sure that continued partnership remained in place and she and Mr. Martinez met earlier this week to do a relaunch and the purpose of family navigators is to make an assessment and connect them to the correct resources.

Mr. Goldstein asked if a survey had been done prior the is one. Ms. Watt said once in 2018. Mr. Goldstein asked what the difference in the results were from the survey from 2018 to the results from this survey. Ms. Watt said in the 2018 survey 20% of the students surveyed reported signs of depression and this year it was almost double that.

Ms. McMurrer commended the city and the school district for working together in partnership. She asked how many family navigators there are currently and is it sufficient with the increase in depression. Ms. Estrella said there are three family navigators as well as two community resource specialists and 1 ½ youth care coordinators and are all collaborative and share resources and if more resources are needed, they would make the request to the Common Council.

Ms. Revulus asked how cultural sensitivity is dealt with especially with those that have more of a conservative look to the majority of what they are seeing, and what resources are available. Mr. Martinez said all the support staff in mental health and the professionals in the district have to take into consideration the cultural aspects and a trust is developed with those families with the family navigators so that they can communicate with the schools.

Ms. Baekey said that everything that is being discussed is incredible and the services that are being provided are amazing but the numbers that Ms. Watts presented are very concerning and she is concerned that there are only a few weeks left of this school year and asked what the thoughts and plans are around communications to make sure that our families know what is available. Mr. Daniels said since COVID forced a new blueprint created for the way organizations interact and how information is given out to families and will share the new blueprint.

Ms. Weidema-Lewis said last fall a logic model was developed based on the results of last year's youth survey. She said within the Norwalk Acts initiative that social emotional health has always been at the

core and the goal is to have every Norwalk student connected to a supportive adult in the community and there will be more to come. She also said that another core piece to the work that they will be doing with supporting young people is ensure is that everyone has a good understanding of mental health and the resources and supports that are available. Mr. Daniels said his office is in constant contact with Dr. Estrella's office and just appointed him a direct contact and are looking forward to hosting a meeting with the executive directors of all mental health providers and the Superintendent of Schools and her cabinet.

Ms. Watt said last year addition to the youth survey through a grant did a community survey of adults and their emotional well being was the biggest negative impact of COVID. She said the behavioral health services and support for Norwalkers are always on the NorwalkPartnership.org website as well as the Norwalk Public Schools webpage and the City of Norwalk's Community Services page.

Ms. Argondezzi said the Health Department is working closely with all the folks from this panel as well as other people in the community to figure out what resources are available and work hard to make sure the community workers are aware of all the services that are available and where to point people. Mr. Daniels said they have also partnered with the larger institutions to disseminate the information to the residents as well as using all the city's social platforms as well as working with the district to promote the critical resources.

Ms. Revolus asked what the process is for follow ups with the families in particularly students who graduated in 2020 and 2021 as well as adults. Ms. Sead said once they graduate, they would be referred to outside resources such as the mental health center at NCC and Family and Children Services. Ms. Estrella said that each agency has a follow up model.

Ms. Smyth said there is a whole generation of kids that live it constant fear and she'd been a Ponus Ridge Middle School teacher when the Sandy Hook Elementary School happened in December 2012, and remembered how genuinely traumatizing the lockdowns are, the drills are. She said we have a whole generation of kids who live in constant fear, remembering that she and her eighth graders would all be terrified, and she would be her teacher self and take care of them, and then as soon as it was over, she would just shake and shake and start to cry, and did that for years as most teachers do, and this is what our kids are going through. She said she wondered how effective the lockdowns are and if there might be a better approach than re-traumatizing our kids. Mr. Martinez said it's being talked about, adding that Uvalde triggered those feelings for anyone who was in education when Sandy Hook happened. He said we always focus on how making sure the kids are feeling a certain kind of way, but we overlook how the adults are feeling, and he thinks it's almost as equal, it's equally important to respond to the social emotional, state of the teachers and the staff in the buildings. He said staff members can't assure children that they're safe when they don't feel like it themselves, as children see right through it and that they're like sponges so when teachers are anxious and nervous or scared and they think they're hiding it really well, the children will see right through it. He said the lockdowns are a larger conversation, obviously and are going to continue talking about it. Ms. Smyth said the mass shooting-inspired anxiety has become part of the children's DNA and it's got to be a major contributing factor to the high increase in anxiety among this generation. Mr. Martinez said that is something that they really need to work on a lot more aggressively and need to be more thoughtful about that. Ms. Smyth said we need to constantly be thinking about it and maybe find different ways to prepare that are less traumatizing to the kids.

Ms. Alterman asked if the farmers market all still accept SNAP dollars and other types of government assistance money. Ms. Argondezzi said they just released the list of the four farmers markets and the list does include which payment options are accepted at each of the markets.

Ms. Alterman asked if the schools or the Health Department do depression screenings. Mr. Martinez said the district was just introduced to two resources this year and is a 2–5-minute screening that is done periodically as needed and works with Power School.

Ms. Johnson thanked each and every one on the panel for all that they are doing and how they are working together. She said the LGBTQ kids often times don't have any family origin and the people that made all of the difference in their life were their teachers and during the pandemic they did not have access to them and it means so much to her that the people on the panel are looking out for them and have the full breath of our city, schools, and community partners and especially the teachers for helping them along the way.

#### **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no new business discussed this evening.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:20PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd