

**CITY OF NORWALK
HEALTH, WELFARE & PUBLIC SAFETY
MAY 23, 2013**

ATTENDANCE: Michelle Maggio, Chair; Bruce Kimmel; Sara Mann;
Jerry Petrini; David Watts

OTHERS: Theresa Argondezzi, Norwalk Health Department; Rhonda
Collins, Human Services Council; Laura Lopez and
Tanasia Ticking, Richard C. Briggs High School students

WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

Ms. Maggio called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. and called the Roll.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present this evening.

RESOLUTION

There were no resolutions presented this evening.

NEW BUSINESS

Health Department:

Richard C. Briggs High School Student PhotoVoice Presentation

Students from Richard C. Briggs High School will present their research findings from a year-long PhotoVoice project conducted in cooperation with the Health Department. PhotoVoice is a research method in which community researchers examine how their community affects their health through photography and then develops a plan for change. After much discussion about the impact of their community on their health, the students narrowed their focus on two main concerns:

- 1) Safety in parks and 2) Substance abuse and Stress.

After meeting with several community stakeholders, including the Briggs Community Board and the Police Department, they have requested time to present to the Committee to explain why these topics are important and how the Committee can help bring about necessary changes.

Ms. Lopez and Ms. Ticking introduced themselves to the Committee members. They gave a PhotoVoice presentation using photographs they had taken in various locations to illustrate their findings. They said that they found a way to take these photographs without putting themselves in danger. They talked about why people use drugs, smoke and drink and said that they want to help. They said that they understand how it feels to be stressed.

Ms. Lopez and Ms. Ticking said that the “scary commercials” on television do not help and add to the stress. They said that they are both teenage mothers and they can’t bring their children to the parks because they are not safe. They suggested putting up surveillance cameras and better lighting, but were told there are budget barriers. Ms. Ticking asked if this Committee could make those suggestions a priority and raise awareness in the community. If more people use the parks, that will create less opportunity for people to use the parks for drugs.

Ms. Lopez said that they are doing this for the next generation of children so they can use the parks. She said that they feel bad that people do not care about what they are talking about until something bad happens. She said that they wanted to present this to this Committee because they have the authority to make changes.

Mr. Watts told Ms. Lopez and Ms. Ticking that he was blown away by their presentation and proud of both of them. He told them that it starts with them to recognize a problem. He told them that their presentation was well put together and that he feels that the rest of the Common Council will want to hear this.

Ms. Mann thanked Ms. Lopez and Ms. Ticking for a wonderful presentation. She told them that they presented a problem and asked if there were possible solutions. Ms. Ticking said that they could hold fundraisers to help raise awareness.

Mr. Kimmel said that he has mixed feelings about the graphic commercials and tends to agree with Ms. Lopez and Ms. Ticking. Ms. Lopez said that they try to scare people and she does not believe people are scared any more. Ms. Ticking said that she used to smoke and would watch those commercials and then pick up a cigarette. She said that she stopped smoking because she has a daughter. She suggested having a child speak about the dangers of smoking would be more effective.

Mr. Kimmel asked if the price of cigarettes effects someone’s decision to smoke. Ms. Ticking said that if the prices keep going up, a lot of people will quit. She suggested providing free or low cost patches.

Mr. Petrini told Ms. Lopez and Ms. Ticking that they gave a great presentation. He asked what the City could do, along with their recommendations, to get people more engaged. Ms. Ticking said that they need more activities for younger kids where they will have better people to look up to. Ms. Mann suggested recruiting mentors to work with students in the younger grades.

Mr. Kimmel talked about the difficulty with transportation from after school programs since late buses are no longer offered in the school system. He said that offering late buses would be worth pursuing.

Ms. Maggio said that as much as she would like to mentor, it is an issue of being accepted. She noted that students who enter the mentoring program want to be there, but was not sure how she would be accepted by others.

Ms. Ticking talked about the “Pen or Penitentiary” program they offer at Briggs. Mr. Petrini asked if it is similar to the “Scared Straight” program that used to be offered. Ms. Collins said that it is good to offer different interventions and hope that one will resonate with a student.

Mr. Watts said that he grew up in an inner city community and there were a lot of distractions. He said that kids idolized the wrong people. He told Ms. Lopez and Ms. Ticking that it was not where they started, but rather where they ended up. He offered words of encouragement to them.

Mr. Kimmel said that he teaches at Norwalk Community College and that it is a great place with a diversified student body. Ms. Ticking said that she will be there in the fall.

Mr. Petrini told Ms. Lopez and Ms. Ticking that by presenting to the Common Council they will be planting seeds for next year’s capital budget. They were invited to present at the June 11th Common Council meeting.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

POLICE DEPARTMENT

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed this evening.

ADJOURN

** MR. WATTS MOVED TO ADJOURN
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services