



SUSAN STACK
CHAIRMAN

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

Human Services Commission

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HOCINE BAOUCHE
YALE CANTOR
TERESA CAVANAGH
JAIME FOSTER
SARAH GAER
SUSANNE HANNIGAN
DEANNA WAMBOLT-GULICK

HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 21, 2020
Recreation/Human Services Complex
31 Arbor Way
6:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Susan Stack, Yale Cantor, Hocine Baouche, Deanna Wambolt-Gulick, Jaime Foster

OTHERS PRESENT: Joy Hollister, Director of Human Services; Stephanie Mather, Recording Secretary

1. **Call to Order:** Susan Stack, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:10PM.

2. **Approval of Minutes: March 9, 2020**

MOVED (FOSTER) SECONDED (BAOUCHE) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 9, 2020 MEETING.

3. **Citizens' Forum:** Yale Cantor spoke and said he was thrilled being able to see everyone. He hopes that they can continue to do more in person meetings like this.

4. **Director's Report:** Joy Hollister discussed how each department coped with Covid-19. She applauded her staff and said how proud she was of them. The Human Services department remained open the whole time. The Senior Center remains closed, but staff have been proactive online. Ms. Hollister received positive emails from other towns on how adaptable Ellington has been. Jaime Foster stated she noticed good traction online with people sharing posts from Human Services departments, especially Youth Services. She said they are doing a good job. First Selectman Lori Spielman delivered boxes of fresh produce from the USDA to the Human Services building last week. All the boxes went. There was a discussion about if the need for food increased during the pandemic. Ms. Hollister stated that they were able to meet the people's needs for food using the Human Services Food Bank, Crystal Lake Food Bank, and the Mobile Foodshare. Flyers for the Foodshare at Rentschler Field were given out. Human Services had signs around town with the department's phone number on it to reach out to people so they knew the department was available to help them with their needs. The department got an increase in calls regarding unemployment. Human Services is finishing up Renters' Rebate and starting Energy Assistance.

They have new protocols in place. They are appointment only, clients must wear a mask when entering the building, only one person per household, and the appointments are staggered.

Youth Services did a lot online during Covid-19 and they made activity bags for the schools. They offer Playgroup at the Park on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Recess Zone will be offered this month for children in kindergarten through eighth grade. It consists of five interactive stations at the Park. Youth Services is going to be at the Farmer's Market on Saturday. In October, they will start to have some programs at the Senior Center. Youth Services had position changes. Jane Roets' position as a counselor was cut during Covid-19, Kayla Condron got hired as the new Prevention Coordinator, and Jessica Maitland got hired as the new Program Coordinator.

Erin Graziani will be retiring from the Senior Center on December 30th. She has been at the Senior Center for thirty-four years. The Senior Center is projecting to open in January. They are reorganizing, working on policy revisions, regulations, and protocols. There was a survey discussion regarding senior centers opening and the willingness or hesitation of people coming back. Sam did many programs online, such as yoga, meditation, TED Talks, and mindfulness. The Senior Center has Rex the Dinosaur and the dinosaur periodically goes around town and engages the community. Erin, Diane, and Rebecca are on the Ad Hoc Long Term Recovery Committee for reopening the town.

Ms. Hollister stated that the Human Services department had a staff meeting regarding their Holiday Program. For everyone's safety, the department decided not to have people donate food baskets for Thanksgiving, and instead, they are going to ask for gift card donations. For the December Program, the department will ask for grocery store and department store gift cards instead of having donors shop for recipients. Letters will go out to donors and recipients at the end of this week or beginning of next week. Parents of children who wish to participate in the December Holiday Program will be asked what gift cards they want for their children, and the Human Services staff will best match up the gift cards received with what the recipients recommend. Changing the Holiday Program is for everyone's safety. The Human Services Commission members were in favor of doing gift cards this year. Ms. Foster discussed that gift cards can be good for the economy and she asked what increments the Human Services department needed. Ms. Hollister would like to provide individuals and couples with a \$50.00 grocery gift card for Thanksgiving, and the amount would increase depending on how many people are in the household. There was a discussion about suggested donations and how that can be positive.

Joy Hollister stated she is in charge of organizing the Ad Hoc Committee for Diversity and Inclusion. The committee has twenty people in it. Ms. Hollister is sending out letters to the Ad Hoc Diversity and Inclusion Committee members notifying them that the first meeting will be held on October 14, 2020. It will be a planning and structure meeting for them to decide how the committee members want to be a committee. The committee members will meet in person, and if anyone from the public wants to listen, they can join via a Zoom meeting. She is excited about the committee and stated she didn't want to exclude anyone, so anyone who showed interest in wanting to be a part of the committee is now on the committee. Jaime Foster suggested doing mind mapping and a good program to use is XMind.

5. Unfinished Business:

- a. Review of Community Survey questions:** Joy Hollister stated that the survey questions will be put on hold. They were supposed to go out right around the time Covid-19 hit, but thought putting them out at that time would get a skewed response. The committee members agreed with her decision.

6. New Business: None

7. Adjournment:

MOTION (CANTOR) SECONDED (FOSTER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN AT 7:06PM.

Submitted By:

X 

Stephanie Mather, Recording Secretary