



# Town of Suffield

## Social Services Commission

Thursday, June 13, 2024 - 8:30 AM Meeting Minutes

Held at Suffield Town Hall/Hybrid Teleconference

Recording of the meeting is available on Town website under Social Services Commission

**Commission Members Present:** Robin Zatony - Chair, Kathleen Bielonko, Sharon Bruno, Nathan Prusi, Andrea (Chace) Wessling

**Commission Members Absent:** Ann Bauchiero

**Department Heads Present:** Kelly Giannuzzi – Youth Services  
Peter Leclerc – Director of Community Services  
Jason Joyce – Housing Authority

1. Chair Robin Zatony called the meeting to order at 8:33am. Commission Members and Department Heads listed above introduced themselves.
2. Review & Approve minutes from the May 9, 2024 meeting. Ms. Bielonko abstained because she was not present at that meeting. Ms. Bruno moved to accept the minutes as written. Ms. Wessling seconded. It was discussed that a 3:0 vote would not be a quorum. **Ms. Bielonko amended her motion to review the minutes at the next meeting. Ms. Bruno seconded. All were in favor; the motion passed 4:0.**

3. Public Comment –None

4. Discussion – Changing the Approach to the Social Services Commission

Chair Zatony proposed a different approach to the meetings and the Commissions work. Rather than listen to report outs from various departments and offer feedback, she suggested the Commission research what opportunities there are to better support the community by developing relationships with key Town, school or community members, reviewing meeting minutes, articles in the Suffield Observer, Hartford Courant etc. She gave examples of issues that have come up in various meetings that this Commission could take on:

- Assisting those facing foreclosure due to back taxes such as by suggesting a home equity loan which is a lower percent interest rate than the Town rate of 18%.
- Assisting Youth Services to address the issue of kids being extremely disruptive at local businesses or the library after school.
- Supporting Suffield Historical Society inc. or our places of worship to get more help for a community work day.

**a) Gather and share information related to Social Services from other sources**

Library – **Ms. Bielonko**

Police Department – **Ms. Bauchiero**

Fire Department/Commission, Planning & Zoning, Suffield Observer – **Mr. Prusi**

Finance – **unassigned**

Schools – **unassigned.** Ms. Giannuzzi shared that the school would be doing a needs assessment this year to determine what issues students feel are impacting them. Mr. Leclerc noted that the Juvenile Review Board previously was mostly high school and some middle school issues but is now more middle school and some grammar school, so issues are starting at younger ages. There are needs without existing resources/materials, such as a course on cell phone usage. Truancy is increasing with little recourse as parents often just withdraw the child and home school via computer vs. hands-on. There are addiction issues and a very high percent of students are vaping.

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They suggested that in order to support the school community, the Commission should start with the principal, who would then put them in touch with the assistant principal. Ms. Giannuzzi is also a source, as are BOE minutes.

Facebook monitoring – **Ms. Wessling**

Dunkin Donuts “Table of Awareness” sessions – **Ms. Bielonko**

Religious organizations – **Ms. Bruno**

Rotary, Veterans – **unassigned**. Mr. Leclerc suggested that if someone wanted to pursue support for Veterans, contacting Fritz King via email would be the best start.

b) **Meet 1x1 with our key people** – how are things going, resources needed (money/grants, volunteers, information, Town input, education, etc.)

i. Peter Leclerc – Parks & Rec and Juvenile Review Board – **Chair Zatory**

ii. Kelly Giannuzzi – Youth & Juvenile Review Board – **Chair Zatory**

iii. New Person – Seniors - **unassigned**

iv. Mary Curtin – Community Aid - **Chair Zatory**

v. Jason Joyce – Suffield Housing Authority - **Chair Zatory**

c) **Research available grants – unassigned**. Mr. Leclerc noted that grant writing is a specific skill and can be a full time job. Suffield is often declined as we are fiscally responsible so less need than other towns. If we are awarded a grant to do something, then there is the issue of resources to carry it out. Town staffing is very lean and grants often don’t allow hiring to do this. Chair Zatory said that Chris Childs may know of an organization that would conduct a needs study, provide a report and funding to move a grant forward.

d) **Town-wide Survey – Ms. Bruno** will get a copy of the last survey and talk to First Selectman Moll about the effort, funding, value.

#### 5. Old Business

a. Affordable Housing Task Force Update – The task force is completing the work to put in front of Board of Selectman. We need 231 more units to get to the required 10% of our required 5,800 units total. Our percentage has actually decreased slightly from 6.45% to 6.15% as new housing has been added. There is a specific calculation that is done to determine what qualifies as affordable. The development over on East St. South is going into the next phase; 17 of an additional 70 will be deemed affordable.

b. Election of Vice Chair – Ms. Bauchiero indicated an interest in being Vice Chair but will postpone as she is not present.

#### 6. New Business

a. Recording the meeting - Chair Zatory asked members if they felt the meetings still needed to be recorded as there are minutes, there is not a requirement to record meetings and it might prevent people from speaking up. The majority of members were in favor of recording mentioning that minutes can be open to interpretation or a very short recap of more in depth discussion and that some prefer to listen vs. read. Meetings will continue to be recorded however Chair Zatory will ask those with public comments if they have first spoken directly to the appropriate parties as there is no opportunity for rebuttal to recorded comments.

b. Replacement for Marcia Dufore – Chair Zatory Contacted Julie Harrison to see if she might have an interest in joining. She will ask First Selectman Moll if we can increase the number of members.

7. Next meeting September 12, 2024 at the Town Hall at 8:30 am (Zoom option available)

8. Adjournment – Ms. Bielonko made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Bruno seconded. All were in favor; the meeting adjourned at 9:35am.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kris Kelliher  
Recording Secretary

c: Town Clerk  
Commission Members  
Department Heads

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