

Bedford Youth & Family Services Committee
MINUTES
Thursday, September 12, 2019

Attendance: Peter Ricci, Chair; Marcia Morgan; Heidi Porter, Director of Health and Human Services; Mary Seymour, Board of Health; Emily Mitchell, Selectman Liaison; Ann Guay, School Committee Liaison; Gina Rada, Veterans' Services District Director,

Minutes: The minutes of May 9, 2019 were approved.

Discussion of Lexington and Bedford Veterans Services – Gina Rada, Veterans' Services District Director:

Gina Rada introduced herself. She is the District Director of Lexington and Bedford Veterans' Services.

She's been working in Bedford for five years, and is a Bedford resident and a veteran.

She splits the case load with her counterpart overseeing all the cases in Lexington, and half in Bedford.

There is an office of the Lexington and Bedford Veterans' Services in Bedford that is open full time. Gina has Monday and Friday office hours in Bedford. First floor of town hall – just past the town clerk's office.

Manages financial assistance program for low income veterans – there are about 4 to 5 low income veterans in Lexington as opposed to 40-50 in Bedford.

There are also veteran families who may not be low income but who may need help with disability claims, enrolling in VA healthcare, etc. Whatever the Department of Veterans Affairs offers, Gina's office can offer.

It is mandated by the state that every town and city needs to have a veterans officer.

Heidi explained that the Lexington and Bedford Veterans Services will be under the umbrella of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Bedford Green is at full capacity now, and there is also a one year waiting list. There are 70 apartments, one of which is reserved for a Resident Assistant to oversee things. You have to be 55 years of age or older, chronically homeless, agree to ongoing consultation with the VA staff to live there. It is a multi-agency project. Peabody Properties owns the facility, has some staff in there as well, and works with Metropolitan Boston to manage the property.

Bedford's homeless veterans can get help through VASH which is the VA's version of a section 8 vouchers. Veterans can look for housing elsewhere as well.

Grants Update

Heidi reported on grants. While the DASH grant has been closed out now, very good data was collected which we can use for future transportation programming – either group transportation, Uber, etc. There's been conversation on acquiring funding for a new BLT van.

Current open grant is the vaping grant – it is a collaboration between– Bedford, Concord and Carlisle. It was a \$25,000 grant.

Bedford High School is on board with vaping diversion – it was a one day educational program, and it will now be a three day program, a meeting with the parents, and a confiscation of the materials, detectors for the bathroom, working with Concord and Carlisle. There will be two detectors at the high school. They detect both vapor and motion – it sends a signal to an app on the vice principal’s cell phone. Health and Human Services will be at the parents’ nights at JGMS and the High School in the fall.

Department Update – Heidi has posted the social worker job – she will be doing another release of the job and further outreach as well. She is hoping to get more applications. She hopes to fill the position soon. The department received back packs from the Salvation Army and they have been giving them out from the office. They are empty backpacks. Heidi hopes to have the backpacks full next year. Staff is working on the annual report which is due by the end of September. Jon Sills contacted Heidi to work with him, his staff, recreation department and other departments on an events fair. It would likely be at a school gym and would potentially include vendors who provide activities like the Learning Express, the Edge, Callahan’s Karate, etc.

Office staff is working on policies and procedures. Heidi is trying to get things written down with a file so that there is documentation of institutional knowledge. Jessica has been working diligently on updating the website. They have a really good resource in the Sudbury social worker who has shared their website with Heidi. It is intuitive. Heidi hopes to have the YFS website be more user friendly and active in the future.

Safe Schools – Bike Lending program – they are looking forward to doing outreach on that.

Hillside/Bacon/Great Road – The sidewalks are almost done, and there’s going to be a small seating area with some Adirondack chairs etc. It may or may not be done by Bedford Day.

Mental health survey is ongoing, and it has been shared with Bedford Green. About 250 people have responded so far. They are hearing that it’s hard to get access to services, not many providers take insurance, etc. Providers and clients all said that there was a lack of understanding about what mental health needs consisted of. Heidi is hoping to offer more counseling hours through Eliot.

Board of Health and Department of Health and Human Services will be changing their hours to match those of the town hall starting on October 7th. Those hours are Monday, 8 am – 7 pm, Tuesday through Thursday, 8 am – 4 pm and Friday, 8 am – 1 pm.

Take Five to Save Lives is a Suicide Prevention initiative being rolled out during the month of September. Periodic outreach and learning modules teach interested parties about the signs of suicide.

Monday night, September 12th, there will be spraying in Bedford for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). They trapped on Tuesday night in two other locations in town. The spraying reduces the mosquito population but it does not eliminate them. West Bedford is the hot spot for activity.

New Business – Some of the YFS Committee member terms will be up in March, so we need to begin thinking about which people are staying on or getting off. Marcia and Peter will be ending their term. We should be thinking of people who might be interested.

Peter mentioned a concern for head injuries from riding bicycles without helmets.

School Committee – Ann Guay reported. She opened by talking about the ongoing discussion about whether/what flyers should be distributed through the schools. The new Davis School renovations are impressive. There are a number of new teachers.

Selectmen – They approved the funding for the Davis Road boardwalk. DPW is also working on a lot of sidewalks as well. Pinehill Road will connect to the Great Road.

Board of Health Update - Mary Seymour reported. She talked about nuisance violations caused by an abandoned swimming pool containing stagnant water on North Road and a concern for EEE. A criminal complaint was filed, and the owners subsequently drained the pool. There was a public hearing and new regulations were approved on body art. They outline the requirements for permitting and experience required for practitioners. The board will send out letters to local boards of health and the state about the mosquito control issue in the state. Heidi and the Board of Health staff have set the dates for the flu clinics and they will have the first one at Bedford Day and will also be giving out DEET wipes for mosquito and tick bite prevention on Bedford Day.