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April 21, 2009

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
ON YOUTH SERVICES

The Committee on Youth Services held a meeting on April 21, 2009, with Chairman John Connolly presiding and Committee Member Alderman Bruce Desmond also present and voting. Also present were School Committeeman Mark Niedergang, Jackie Rossetti from the Mayor's Office, Marlon Ramendal and Amanda Holm from Teen Empowerment, Cory Mashburn from Somerville Cares About Prevention (SCAP), and Nancy Bacci from the Youth Department.

Mr. Mashburn told the members that he has received positive feedback in the form of phone calls and emails regarding the Opiate Speakout and that he is planning to meet with Brian McCarthy, of Constituent Services, to get the video link to the Speakout on the SCAP page of the City's website. He also detailed the report from the April 1st SCAT TV show that featured 3 recovering adolescents, and the questions that were handled from the live studio audience. The video from the show should be running periodically on the city's cable channel.

There were 700 attendees at the April 4th Teen Empowerment Peace Conference. Based on a survey that was distributed to attendees at the conference who were Somerville residents. the top three issues concerning youth are; 1) Drugs and alcohol, 2) Gangs and 3) Teen pregnancy. Several of the comments received noted the importance of realizing the consequences of ones actions. Teen Empowerment is going to host activities that will bring the city's youth together with members of the Somerville Police Department. Two trivia nights and one softball game are being planned and information will be made available once the dates are determined.

Mr. Ramendal inquired if the survey result regarding teen pregnancy was a result of increased glamorization of the "Hollywood" lifestyle and Ms. Bacci told those present that she has information on the positive imagery that is available for young girls.

Amanda Holm reported on the Youth Worker Network meeting with the Somerville Police Department and said that Teen Empowerment youth are unsure of their rights when it comes to interactions with the Police, noting that they feel unable to say no to Police Officers or other authority figures. There were some questions about the diversion program that is taking place between the Somerville Police and the Middlesex District Attorney's office. Ms. Bacci said that she would email the program guidelines to members of the Board of Aldermen.

Ms. Bacci reported on the Summer Jobs program that due to the current economic situation, it is more difficult to obtain offers of employment for the city's youth. She will continue to contact businesses in an

effort to secure more positions. Applications are due by April 24th and interviews will take place the week of May 18th. Orientation is scheduled for June 29th and jobs will commence on July 6th and end on August 21st.

Patty Contente was not able to attend this meeting, but she submitted the following report on the Activities of the Clinical Youth Specialist/Trauma Response Network:

Participated in the Service Fair at the Peace Conference and 5 volunteers provided a presence after the healing ceremony for youth who may have needed support.

Continue to work on recruitment for girls afterschool programs. Thus far the “Future Leaders of Somerville” mentoring program is up and running. “Som’ Girls Move” will begin in May and “Somerville Community Girls” is still recruiting and hoping to begin on April 27th

Mayor’s Task Force on Suicide and Mental Health will offer two more workshops on QPR (Question, Persuade and Refer) suicide prevention. May 7th 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM will be for youth only ages 13 – 19, at Teen Empowerment and May 14th will be for adults 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM at the Walnut Street Center, 35 Cherry St. May 7th is also Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day and the Task Force is partnering with the Somerville Public Library to present a display of books and resources at the Main and West Somerville Branches. Volunteers from the Task Force will also set up a station outside each of the Branches to promote reducing stigma by “busting” the myths. We will be giving away and blowing bubbles to emphasize the need to reduce stigma related to receiving help.

Jen Lawrence was not able to attend this meeting, but she submitted the following information that Groundwork Somerville is hiring youth for their annual Green Team and that applications are due by May 18th.

No papers were acted on.

Alderman John Connolly, Chairman
Committee on Youth Services

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Committee on Youth Services,
April 21, 2009

In Board of Aldermen

Clerk