

**HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

April 19, 2023

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via Cisco Webex

Members Present:

Tal Shahar, At Large Member

Nancy Sushinsky, Caregiver Member

Deborah Moore, Consumer Member

Wesley Hicken, At Large Member

Stacey Gold, Caregiver Member

Leah White, At Large Member

Ricky Mui, At-large Member

Amanda Schwartz, At Large Member and
Chair

Jessica Peterson, Consumer Member

Members Absent: Leon Suskin, Caregiver
Member

Camille Kroll, At Large Member

Mayor and Council Liaison: Councilmember Mark Pierzchala

Staff Present: Frederika Granger, Community Services Manager

RE: Call Meeting to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:35pm by Amanda Schwartz, Chair

RE: Community Forum

No guests

RE: Approval of Minutes from March 15, 2023

Minutes approved unanimously with one edit: change Ms. Peterson to Dr. Peterson

RE: Voice of Children, Ayelit Giladi, Education Sociology

Acknowledged by National Association of Education of Young Children as a good curriculum. about bullying and harassment. Advocate for children's rights, morals, issues, etc. Started age 5 and up. Teach about respect, dignity and equality. Children and protecting their bodies. In play, every fifth child in a game will be harassed, i.e. pulling down pants, etc. They don't think anything is wrong. After two minutes it is harassment, abuse. Found that this behavior starts at an early age and good to teach children at this young age about what is wrong and right. Brought to Israel Minister of Education. Age 5-18—look at each age—gets harder when get older. Seven years working with Min of Ed. After that, independently with schools.

Then, need to take global. Then Covid came. Decided to make it digital. Nine units of digital training.

Not expensive, wanted to make it affordable for people to use globally. Training with 2D cartoons. Not using words like harassment and abuse but teaching what is wrong and right. So, when adults try to harass or abuse them, they know it is wrong. How to teach children without

scaring them. Start with the term respect, dignity and equality. They need to understand respect. Use turtle for dignity, respect such that turtle would retreat into shell if not shown dignity and respect. Find examples in what children are learning in school. This empowers children. At end of program, build a safety program – how to protect yourself, to whom to report. For teachers, given this good path, they feel more comfortable presenting material. Sometimes gives a child the opportunity to feel more comfortable speaking up.

Morocco, Ghana, South Africa – can see the teachers see the need and that it works.

Ms. Schwartz: caregiver grantees work with children who have experienced troubling things. Councilmember Pierzchala thanked presenter and shared that he would share the material with MCPS, his wife who works in Media Center.

Link: <https://voiceofchild.net>

RE: Community Services Report

The ROCKIDZ youth mentoring program continues to have high mentee attendance. Program Coordinator has added Earle B. Wood MS with 21 mentees. It is more of a therapeutic recreation program, with only a few mentors. Part of the programming will include a three-session therapeutic art program with VisArts, who received a grant from Greater Washington Community Foundation for this.

Latino Youth Development high school students are enjoying their soccer season with SAM Soccer. Three are graduating from high school, one going into trades, one going to MC and one going to a four year college. There are 29 students in the Wood MS program. They play soccer but are not in SAM Soccer this season. They are enjoying playing soccer. Program Coordinator continues to work with Julius West MS to get a program going with the students there. There are seven girls in lunchtime program at Wood MS on Wednesdays. They girls seem to appreciate having a facilitated outlet in which they may talk about their emotions.

The Youth and Family Counselor (YFC) and the Youth and Family Counseling Specialist (YFCS) continue to be at capacity. The Counseling Team continues to maintain regular sessions at dedicated schools and has continued to receive referrals at a higher rate than this time the previous year. Meadow Hall ES has been added for a half day, currently with three students being seen. The YFC reports that she has had several students referred who are at high risk for which the Crisis Center and Child Welfare were called. When there are referrals with high risk, YFC works with school counselor to access what is needed for the students and families. Unfortunately, there continues to be a shortage of therapists in the area.

Linkages to Learning continues at Maryvale ES with a full mental health caseload and a 3rd grade therapeutic group on emotion regulation. As well there is a 5th grade lunch bunch, Edutainment group after school focusing this semester on the Art in STEAM, a parent enrichment group (topics covered are parent view, summer camps, internet safety, economic stability, dangers of Fentanyl), and, the Family Case Manager has a full caseload helping families.

REAP, HEAP and Bridge programs are very busy now due to the County's Covid rent relief and the Covid SNAP supplement's ending. As well, now that the voluntary rent increase for landlords has been published, many calls are coming in from tenants asking why their rent is going up more than the voluntary rental increase rate.

Bank on Rockville has seven families participating. Staff will continue to add clients. VistaShare, the new department client electronic record keeping system is being used for this and for REAP now.

RE: City of Rockville FY23 and FY24 Budgets and ARPA Updates

- Bank On Rockville outreach is going well.
- The Human Services Needs Assessment RFP is out. Proposals are due April 21st. The expectation to have the assessment report completed by November. This way, the results can inform the City budget and the Caregiver Grant Program as well as city programming. The evaluation committee is Niambi Powell, Alexis D'Angelo and Frederika Granger. Ms. Granger will keep HSAC informed and HSAC will be one of the groups to be interviewed about needs and services.
- Housing and Community Development's Grants and Programs Analyst vacancy is at risk of being frozen for FY24 as the Mayor and Council are trying to find ways to save money in the FY24 budget. Three positions need to be frozen in the city. It was asked what the department will do if this position is frozen to which Ms. Granger said they would try to make do and absorb as much of the work as they can.
- In general, with the need to find ways to trim the FY24 budget it was asked if grants could make up the shortfall. CM Pierzchala shared that grants are generally for projects rather than ongoing operating expenses, which are what is being addressed. The Caregiver Grant Program funding may be at risk but has not been discussed thus far as a place to trim. The Department of Finance shared at Monday's Mayor and Council meeting both ways to raise money, through property tax increase, and ways to trim. Next week's Mayor and Council meeting will include a budget work session even though that was not the intention.

RE: Caregiver Grants FY23 Update

Ms. Granger shared that she had just finished reading the quarter three reports and that the caregivers continue to do amazing work. Common themes include the violence in shelters, some due to some residents who suffer from mental illness and are unable to regulate their emotions. The staff encourage those residents to seek help for their illness. Some will not, some will but there is a waitlist, and some will access services. Housing potentially violent residents is difficult, so they stay in the shelter longer. Those who do get housing are grateful. The supportive housing residents are happy to have in person workshops on vocational training, banking, mindfulness etc. The Language Outreach Program has found that there are many students who take the virtual classes on their phones while at work. Also, many take more than one class and the conversation class at the same time so they can learn faster. Some drop out but come back when they have more time. The clinics are getting patients to come in for preventive care after the pandemic and some have had symptoms that need further exploration come up,

some that could be dangerous, i.e. cancer, losing site. Specialty care continues to be hard to get, i.e. long waitlist. MANNA has seen a 40% increase in need for food and do not see that going away.

The Caregiver Coalition has been started up again. Ms. Granger will lead/facilitate it. The first meeting is on May 16th. It will be an opportunity for the caregivers to learn about Rockville's priorities and more so for them to be able to collaborate and learn about each other's best practices. Ms. Granger will ask them about Salute to NonProfits – if they would like to do it, if they prefer Farmer's Market or Town Square, do they want just human service providers or others?

RE: Caregiver Grants Program Process for FY24

The recommended funding for 18 programs is in the City Manager's proposed budget. Hearings are occurring now. Community Reach's five programs testified at Mayor as did Montgomery County Coalition on Homeless.

RE: Testimony to M&C

Ms. Schwartz intended to testify on Monday but has been extremely busy with a Maryland Rebuilds grant for which she is hiring 124 professional early childhood teachers and has only one other person she is working with who works just 10% on this effort. Dr. Peterson intended to testify as well but had family emergency. When she has time, Dr. Peterson would like to testify on gun violence and gender non-conformity.

Testimony on behalf of HSAC must be approved by at least six members by the Friday before the Monday meeting. The person providing testimony then emails it to cityclerk@rockvillemd.gov and tells them how they want testimony presented (written only, verbally in person, verbally virtually). City Clerk will respond with instructions.

- TBD Mr. Suskin (mental health, esp in shelters)
- April 24 Community Forum – Mr. Mui in person on mental health, dangers of street drugs, Ms. Moore, written in support of caregiver grants
- May 1 Budget Work Session
- May 8 Budget Adopted
- May 22
- June 5
- June 12 – HSAC annual report Ms. Schwartz

RE: Volunteer Website Demonstration

Ms. Granger showed the City Volunteer website. One suggestion is that the caregiver links be linked to SSL opportunities. Ms. Granger will look into that.

RE: Roundtable Discussions

For next meeting, on the topic of gun violence, ACTION ITEM: Ms. Gold will try to get a presenter on what can this commission do, Ms. Schwartz will ask Moms Demand Action in Virginia for someone here, and Mr. Mui will try to get Congressman Raskin. Moms Demand Action typically has 3-4 specific asks.

RE: Federal Legislation Advocacy (All Members)

Ms. Schwartz shared from Julie Palakovich Carr's weekly legislative season newsletter (juliepalakovichcarr.com). Wes Moore, in response to education employee shortage, is prioritizing bill to support student teachers. Also, veterans getting a larger retirement income exemption. He is also promoting service year after high school, particularly in education field. There are several initiatives in healthcare and social services (prescriptions, mental health, gender affirming tx, stolen SNAP benefits, housing, etc.). Federal government is arguing about the budget. There may be a government shut down which would impact local federally funded programs. Sometimes private philanthropists will support the shortfall but only if they are asked.

RE: Other Items

- Salute to NonProfits: The value is for residents to learn about providers and for providers to get volunteers. ACTION ITEM: Ms. Granger will ask Caregivers for their ideas about this.
- From last meeting: Resource Guide: there is a need for all caregivers to have a resource guide. ACTION ITEM: Ms. Granger will work on this – there are some – need to make sure they are current.

RE: Agenda items for next meeting, May 17, 2023, Virtual

- Usual report items: Forum, Minutes, Community Services, Caregivers, budget update, testimony update, Federal Legislation
- Presenters on Gun Violence
- Salute to NonProfits
- Needs Assessment
- Roundtable presentation for June

RE: Adjourn

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn; unanimous vote to adjourn at 8:20pm