

Boxborough Well-Being Committee
Meeting Minutes: September 12, 2012

Attendees:

Frank Powers, Randy White, Selina Shaw, Carol Haras, Julie Towell, Laura Arenault, Channing Wagg, Gail Walsh, Maureen Adema, Tamara Bedard, Kate Smyers, Les Fox, Warren Ryder, Liz Markiewicz

Called to order 9:00 am

Minutes of the July 18, 2012 meeting were approved unanimously.

Carol Haras and Julie Towell from AB Regional Schools attended as invited guests. Frank described the mission of the committee and talked about the factors leading to the focus of the meeting—substance abuse among local youth. Chief Ryder spoke about what he's seeing in Boxborough. He remarked that the recent decriminalization of marijuana is sending mixed messages about marijuana use, which remains illegal. He emphasized that the marijuana available today is much more potent than the marijuana many parents are familiar with from their youth. He feels part of the problem is that parents don't see marijuana use as a problem. He is also seeing an increase in the abuse of prescription drugs, especially painkillers. He also is seeing an abuse of drugs typically prescribed to treat ADHD, such as Ritalin. He attributes the increase in car break-ins experienced in Boxborough is attributable to drug abusers trying to fund their habits.

Julie Towell said that the high school sees the gateway effect of marijuana and a lot more experimentation with it since decriminalization. She outlined all the programs that AB has put in place to reach out to kids and make them feel connected. Every student is now assigned to a group of six or less who meet regularly with an adult from the school. She also spoke of the consequences for drug and alcohol offenses: expulsion, suspension, loss of playing time/captaincy for athletes. She would like to launch a parent-parent committee to get parents to face facts about kids' drug and alcohol abuse. She also said that the Acton Police Youth Officer meets every Monday with school administrators to talk about kids that were involved in incidents over the weekend.

Channing Wagg pointed to stress as the underlying driver behind this behavior. Julie said that the Youth Risk Behavior Survey has been modified to get a better understanding of what stresses kids are experiencing.

Maureen asked if there wasn't a way to communicate with parents so they can hear about issues of drug and alcohol abuse that are happening within the school population. Julie said that it might be possible to publicize the number and types of incidents by including a summary in the regular newsletters that principals send to parents already.

Frank said he would like to move forward and publish the weekly incidents involving youth in the Beacon and in the monthly school newsletters. He said there was a need to find a way to reach out to the community to make people more aware of the substance

abuse problem. Julie agreed to set up a joint meeting between the Well-Being Committee and the Acton Safety Net group for October 18.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05am.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Markiewicz