

YOUTH COMMISSION MEETING
Westborough Youth and Family Services Office
Room 21, Forbes Municipal Building
45 West Main Street, Westborough, MA
September 9, 2013
7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

YOUTH COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

Corbin Whitaker, Christine Anthony, Andy Rosenshine, Judith Tully, Patricia Ainsleigh, Pranit Lahoty, Jack Chuma, Meredith Wolpert.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Oscar Najarian, Gerad Sockol and Jesse Abell.

WYFS:

John Badenhausen, Director
Cathy Cairns, Administrative Assistant

7:30 PM: MEETING OPENED

Andy called the meeting to order. The June 2013 minutes were reviewed. Pranit made a motion to accept the minutes, Judith seconded, and the minutes were accepted unanimously. Andy started member introductions for the benefit of our guest Jesse Abell.

7:35 PM: YOUTH REPORT

School has started and the kids reported they don't feel stressed yet. Some seniors have started to prepare college applications for early acceptance. There is a new principal, Brian Callaghan. Football season has started and the various clubs have started up, including Interact, a high school club affiliated with the Rotary Club.

7:40 PM: INTERVIEW WITH YC CANDIDATE JESSE ABELL

The current YC members spoke about their background and experience and why they became involved in the YC.

Jesse Abell said he has been in Westborough for two years and is the pastor at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. He is interested in strengthening ties to the community and has experience with youth groups and interfaith groups. He works with his parishioners and makes referrals to counseling groups/organizations outside of the church for families in need.

Group members questioned if there would be confidentiality issues since he works with youth and families in town, and some of these youth might be involved with the YC. They also questioned his feelings about gay, lesbian and transgender youth. He responded saying he has done extensive interfaith and youth work and that St. Stephen's Church is a Welcoming Congregation. He said he didn't think it would be a problem.

John said meeting protocol is that a motion needs to be made and seconded, and then discussion follows. So Andy made a motion to recommend that Jesse Abell be appointed by the Board of Selectmen for the open seat on the Youth Commission. Pranit seconded the motion. Jesse Abell excused himself from the meeting at 8:13 pm.

8:13 PM: DISCUSSION:

The group voiced concerns that Jesse, as a leader in town, has a prominent position and this could create an impression of a conflict of interest with the votes he would make on the Youth Commission. His connection and responsibility to the church might have the appearance of affecting his vote as a Youth Commission Member.

As someone providing counseling services to Westborough residents, he might be referring people to WYFS, and so would have an awareness of the clients at WYFS that other board members don't have since they work outside of Westborough and don't work with Westborough clients. In addition since he is counseling parishioners, it is possible that his presence on the youth commission would deter people from joining the Youth Commission as members or youth members.

A few group members raised the concern that these opinions voiced might be seen as religious discrimination and felt uncomfortable in denying a clergy person a position on the Youth Commission because of religious affiliation. But other members stated their concern was not with Jesse's religious affiliation, but more with issues of confidentiality and conflict of interest that could arise due to his prominent position in Westborough.

It was pointed out that one of the benefits of counseling offered by WYFS is that it is not religiously affiliated and therefore offers a place to go for assistance for those community members who do not identify as belonging to a faith community or feel alienated by religion.

Group members discussed the possibility of seeking advice from Town Counsel before voting but decided not to delay the vote.

The group took a vote whether or not to recommend Jesse Abell to the Board of Selectmen as a member of the Youth Commission.

0 votes in the affirmative

7 votes in the negative

1 abstention

The Motion failed.

John will contact Jesse Abell with the outcome.

8:50 PM: MEETING ADJOURNED

NEXT MEETING – Monday, October 7th, 2013 at 7:30 PM