

Belmont Wellness Coalition (BWC)
DFC Grant SPO-80659-02
Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 22, 2020 at 10:30 – 12:00 PM
Virtual

BWC Members Present:

Lisa Gibalerio (Wayside), David Frizzell (Fire Chief), Melissa O'Connor (BHS SRO), Anne Wang (EDC, Grant Evaluator), Mike Crowley (School Committee, parent, Belmont Media Center), Pam Palmucci (Wayside Intern), Ellie Lesser (BHS grade 9 student), Corinne Jackman (Belmont High School Nurse), Amy Kirsch (Belmont Helps, parent)

BWC Members Absent:

Wendy Conroy (Chair, Sexuality Educator), Kim Raubenheimer (parent, nutritionist), Michelle Drolsbaugh (Minding Your Mind), Elizabeth Brown (parent, Public Health Evaluator), Veera Mylapore (parent), Sue Morris (Chair of the Youth Commission), Traci Doherty (parent, nurse), Stephanie Sunderland (Wayside), Rev. Joe Zarro (Clergy, parent), Leah Lesser (parent), Beth Rumley (Nursing Director), Annie Gladfelter (BASEC), Pam Eagar (Town Meeting Member), Sara Masucci (Teacher), Julie Crockett (TMM, parent), Jonna Logan (Nurse, parent), Jane Fox (Public Health Professional, parent), Portia Thompson (Parent), Janice Darius (Assistant Superintendent), Wesley Chin (Director, Health Department), Diana Ekman (Assistant Director, Health Department), Jeff Hansell (Media Specialist), Patti Forte (parent), Kate Bowen (School Committee member, parent), Kristine Pugliese (CMS SRO), Elizabeth Dionne (Warrant Committee/TMM member, parent), Barbara Bulfoni (Chenery PTO, parent), Julia Patriciu (parent), Analia Barrantes Karma (parent)

1. Introductions, Check-Ins, and Welcome

Those BWC members who were present introduced themselves:

Anne Wang- The evaluator for the Coalition via the Drug Free Community Grant (DFC). Lisa noted that Anne has been working with the Coalition since the fall of 2018. Anne helps compile data and analyzes the information gathered from the student focus groups. In addition, she leads the presentations regarding the Youth Service Risk Behavior (YSRB) data. The data from this survey informs the Coalition's strategic action plan and focuses our outreach to parents.

Melissa O'Connor- School Resource Officer in Belmont, this will be her 7th year serving as BHS's SRO. She brings both a Police and School perspective to the Coalition. Lisa recognized Melissa for her participation in a recent Belmont Media Center video (produced by our student representative Ellie Lesser!) focusing on best practices for physical distancing during COVID-19.

Mike Crowley- Member of the Belmont School Committee, Mike said he is looking forward to supporting the BWC's mission. Lisa mentions Mike's leadership and partnership with regard to the Belmont Media Center and producing the 12 weekly video segments during

the pandemic.

Corinne Jackman- School nurse at Belmont High School; offers the nursing perspective from the high school.

Chief Frizzell- Belmont Fire Chief, leads emergency responders. He has been very active in the town's response during COVID-19. He said he is concerned about the unintended exposure teens are experiencing as restrictions lift, and how they might be bringing the virus back home to more vulnerable family members.

Ellie Lesser - Rising Belmont High School freshman. Ellie gained local media attention during COVID-19 for creating an engaging educational video, which explored the importance of physical distancing utilizing local Belmont residents.

Amy Kirsch- Founder of Belmont Helps, which was launched on March 14, in response to the pandemic. Belmont Helps is a mutual aid network, which in addition to offering various forms of support to Belmont residents, it has also organized *Belmont Dines*, buying gift cards to restaurants who are struggling financially. Belmont Helps also has started a protective mask drive, with the goal of providing masks to all residents in need of them. BH is also leading a *kindness drive* in Belmont called *Bright in Belmont*, where local residents can collect rocks from the senior center and decorate them and distribute across town. For more information, see: <https://www.Belmonthelps.org>.

Lisa acknowledged Amy's efforts and noted what a phenomenal and comprehensive resource Belmont Helps has been for the community.

2. Updates Since March:

a.) COVID-19's Impact on Belmont, overall compliance, etc.

Lisa briefly reviewed the work and outreach she has been doing for the community throughout COVID-19, including phone calls with parents, conversations with fellow Coalition members, televised educational video segments via the Belmont Media Center, articles published in local media outlets, Tip Sheets, etc. She mentioned to members that she received a phone call from a parent who was upset by the recent opening of restaurants in Belmont Center and the parent found the tables to be too close and as well as the chairs. Six feet of distancing was not achieved.

Fire Chief Frizzell responded that only family members should be eating together at tables, and therefore would not need masks since they live in the same household. The Chief mentioned that some restaurants are using shower curtains to separate tables. Lisa stated that she expects the health department is following the situation very closely.

b.) Student Focus Groups (which were put on hold)

The BWC has *not* held any student focus groups this spring due to COVID. Planning was in place so that in the fall of 2020, the DFC grant would have supported (funded) a staff member (or perhaps a new hire) to facilitate a student/peer group. Lisa is thrilled to have Ellie (BHS freshman) on board to continue to represent the student voice/perspective,

however, the goal had been to have hopefully established a more formal peer group that worked with the Coalition. Given the pandemic, what might happen this fall remains uncertain.

Mike expects it might be difficult to establish a peer group in the fall; he suggested that Lisa check in with Janice Darius to see if student focus groups could possibly resume (virtually). Lisa agreed and is hopeful that focus groups can resume in some form, in the not too distant future.

Mike asks: Is it safe to have these groups via ZOOM? Are other towns having them? Anne responded that yes, other towns are doing focus groups and that focus groups have to be done in a safe, trusting, and confidential environment. Overall it has worked out well to do SFG virtually.

Pam (types in the chat) that in Brookline, there are social workers facilitating these kind of youth groups.

c.) Partnership with The Loved Child (TLC)

Lisa provided background information about the Coalition's partnership with The Loved Child. The Loved Child (Jennifer Gillette) had reached out to Lisa last January to see if the Coalition could work with parents of teens and tweens to offer parenting strategies and support. Such workshops ("parent conversations") have continued and are now virtual. In fact, Lisa is doing a series of four workshops, this month. Lisa mentioned how The Loved Child will not be leasing the same space, going forward, and will try to reach out to local businesses to do employee outreach – aka, "TLC at Work". It's possible these parent, at work, conversations will need to be virtual in the fall as well.

d.) Belmont Media Center video segments

The Belmont Media Center provided a platform "*Belmont Journal News Now*" in which Lisa collaborated with Mike to produce 12 weekly video segments relevant to parenting through COVID and strategies to support both youth and their care-givers. The segments can be found on the BWC Facebook page and links will be on the BWC website once it is up and running.

e.) YMHFA is going virtual

Lisa noted that the Youth Mental Health First Aid training will soon be available virtually. The training is about 6 hours long - which does not include the pre/post work. She urges anyone working with youth to take this course as it provides a useful action plan for supporting youth who might be facing a mental health crisis.

3. Peer Leadership Updates:

- Where are we on establishing a Youth Development Program?
- Next Steps

Lisa asked that if any Coalition member wants to work on the peer leadership subgroup this

summer -- to please let her know.

She posed the question: What can the BWC do to bolster our peer leadership in the fall? How can the BWC support programming aimed at youth for this initiative and how can we tap into the youth perspective to learn topics that are important to them?

Anne suggested we reach out to Janice about this, or perhaps have this conversation with the Chenery and High school principals since it is a building level goal. Lisa replied that this makes this sense and perhaps someone can help move this forward this summer. Mike offered that he would be happy to be a part of this conversation with Janice. Lisa noted that the Peer Leadership program was just starting to get traction when COVID-19 forced schools to close.

4. Seeking Volunteers for Summer Subgroups:

a. Belmont's SEL Framework

- Breaking down the SEL basics
- How to Impart Belmont's SEL Framework to parents?

Lisa noted that many parents in the school community are not aware of the particulars of Belmont's Social Emotional Language (SEL) Framework. Lisa expressed concern that parents are not aware of the specific language being used in school which means that families aren't likely using consistent language at home that aligns with the SEL curriculum.

Anne noted that the best way to do this is to confer with school leaders to identify which SEL program they are using in classrooms, such as Second Step, Responsive Classroom, etc. so that the language is specific to the school community and parents/caregivers know which language to reinforce at home.

Ellie offered that nothing really stands out from the Second Step program in middle school, but lessons were emphasized in her elementary school experiences with homework and exercises. Anne responded that this is good information to know because it will be important to understand why these lessons are being missed in middle school.

Corinne offered that SEL is absent at the high school, however, there is talk about getting an advisory period when students can receive these deep lessons enriched and further discussed in a safe environment.

Lisa noted that Janice was hoping to have some professional training for teachers this summer concerning trauma informed support for students.

b. BWC Website (BelmontWellness.Org) is almost ready!

- Any suggestions? Additional resources? Additional links? Photos?

Lisa: The BWC website will hopefully be launched in July. There will be links to our community partners, e.g., Belmont Public Schools, Belmont Helps, TLC, the Health Department, Minding Your Mind, etc. She said the website uses Wordpress and is a little

clunky to develop – and - she is hoping to have the site be user friendly, engaging, and kept up to date with Coalition events, resource information, and other news items.

Lisa requested input and feedback on the site once it is live.

c. *Peer Leadership* (See notes above in #3)

- Ideas for Fall 2020
- Short Term Goals

5. Closing Thoughts, New Business, etc.

A Goodbye:

Chief Frizzell said goodbye to the BWC and announced that he will be retiring at end of August. Lisa thanked the Chief and noted how supportive the Chief has been to the Coalition, finding the BWC space to have meetings and she expressed her deep appreciation concerning his commitment to the Coalition's mission and of educating the Belmont community on youth wellness and substance use prevention.

A Request:

Lisa reiterated that she would like two subgroups formed over summer:

1. Exploring options to bolster Peer Leadership / Student Focus Groups and
2. a group to explore the SEL Framework being taught in each school with the goal of reinforcing key points for families to use at home.

To Do: Please reach out to Lisa and let her know if you would perhaps like to work on one of these topics over the summer.

To Do: Lisa is going to reach out to Janice and suggest a meeting to discuss student focus groups and the establishment of some type of peer leadership program as well as ways in which the SEL curriculum can be imparted to caregivers.

Lisa thanked Coalition members for attending this meeting and for offering their input.

6. Set Next Meeting

- Lisa will be in touch throughout the summer.