

Andover Youth Services Steering Committee Minutes

Virtual Meeting Broadcast on AndoverTV

March 1, 2022

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

Town Manager Andrew Flanagan welcomed members to the first meeting of the Andover Youth Services Steering Committee (AYSS). This Committee has been formed to gather public input and develop a profile as part of the hiring process for a new AYS Director.

Andrew then introduced Director of Human Resources, Jessica Porter, Director of Community Services, Jemma Lambert, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), Albert Pless, Consultant Andrea Egmont, Chair Ryan Murphy, Trent DuBonis, Emily DiCesaro, Brian Masterson, Timothy McCarron, Laura McVeigh, and Lis Tamarkin.

Ryan thanked the members and asked each person to say a little about themselves and reason for joining the committee. All members expressed an interest in working on the hiring process for a new Youth Services Director to “get it right” for the youth of Andover. They all bring a child or youth- oriented perspective whether from having children engaged in activities in town or from working with them in a professional capacity.

Andrea (Andy) then spoke about the need to identify components that work well for youth and to think about ways to evolve forward using those pieces as a foundation. She noted that strong resources exist in Andover and that it is one of only a few towns with an established Youth Center. The goal of this group is to help create the right profile to identify the right person to lead this effort.

Jemma also welcomed everyone and said that she is committed to helping the committee with this transition and is happy to answer questions or provide support needed.

Andy asked the committee to think about first things that come to mind when thinking about a Youth Center. The themes included a welcoming community,

inclusiveness and allowing for a mix of different groups. Also mentioned for the Director's role was an ability to foster collaboration, ability to evolve with needs, and commitment to providing a welcoming place for everyone.

Andy talked about ways to attain these goals and said each member would be asked to complete a survey before the next meeting. This survey will then be discussed with a focus on prioritizing themes for use by the hiring committee as they interview job candidates. The survey may be taken with family members and friends—the goal is to bring together diverse ideas about a youth center.

When the survey is finalized, it may be distributed to individuals in town who currently work with youth such as school personnel including teachers, counselors, and coaches. Jemma mentioned community partners or stakeholders using perhaps a town hall type forum. Church groups, the YMCA, and Library also were mentioned.

A brief discussion followed about why kids may not be participating to the extent they used to at the Youth Center and some thoughts were that middle school kids may drop in and out of structured activities, other kids may not be participating due to COVID, and one member said that there may not be a friendly environment. It was suggested that perhaps it might be helpful to put together a focus group on this issue, and research other communities for best practices.

Andy asked the committee to think about core issues that a potential candidate must know about before considering the position of Director.

Andrew talked about a comprehensive interview process which will go beyond the question- and- answer format of a traditional interview. A panel of different individuals will be involved and candidates who get through the first interview- stages will spend a day “on the job” so they will have an opportunity to experience the challenges and day to day issues involved. This assessment day also provides the hiring committee with an ability to see first- hand a candidates' ability to handle challenges as well as their critical thinking skills.

Andy presented the AYS Vision Survey to the Committee which was discussed in part as follows:

AYS vision survey: “is designed to collect the ideas, priorities, and values of committee members that we will use to create a job description screening tool

and possible interview questions. It will also be used to create a public survey to prioritize qualities and experience we are looking for in a new director”.

The survey will ask for respondents to check all that apply including youth, parent, law enforcement, schools, businesses, media, youth serving organizations, religious and fraternal organizations, civic and volunteer groups, healthcare professional, state, local, and tribal agencies, businesses/media youth serving organizations, civic, volunteer, health care or other organizations.

Some of the survey questions to be answered may include “what kind of community do we want to create for participants and families through AYS”; “what are values you want to see young people have in their lives”; and “what are three of the cornerstones or foundations of a Youth Center?”

Andrew said that the job description and posting would likely occur by the end of the 5th AYS Steering Committee meeting.

Ryan asked about preferences for time and date for the next meeting and members agreed to the 7:30 PM start time.

The next meetings will be March 15 and March 22 at 7:30. The town managers’ office will send out meeting notices. Andy will send surveys to members and members will complete and share findings at the next meeting.

It was moved by Ryan, seconded by Tim and voted 9-0 to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM.

Roll call: Andrew, Y; Ryan, Y; Trent, Y; Emily, Y; Brian, Y; Tim, Y; Laura, Y; Albert, Y Lis, Y.

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AYS Vision Survey