

# **SOUTH WINDSOR BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE (SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL)**

**MINUTES  
CAUCUS ROOM**

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**REGULAR MEETING  
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## **1. Call Meeting to Order**

Chairperson Matthew Galligan called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

## **2. Roll Call**

### **Members Present**

Matthew Galligan, Town Manager, Chairperson  
Vanessa Perry, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Human Resources  
Raymond Favreau, Director of Parks and Recreation  
Shelby Kosa, Recreation Supervisor/Director of 4<sup>th</sup> R Program  
Anthony Leone, Resident/Parent  
Karen Lydecker, Resident/Parent  
Craig Zimmerman, Board of Education  
Audrey Delnicki, Town Council  
Andy Paterna, Town Council

### **Members Absent**

Tiffany Caouette, Principal of Pleasant Valley Elementary School  
Beth Esstman, Board of Education

### **Guests Present**

Bob Dickinson, Resident  
Mary Justine Hockenberry, Town Council  
Toby Lewis, Resident  
Lisa M. Maneely, Town Council  
Jason Meade, Resident  
Matt Riley, Town Council  
Janice Snyder, Town Council  
Jeff Trachtenberg, Resident

## **3. New Business**

### ***Review Before and After School Care to Date***

Mr. Galligan explained how the 4<sup>th</sup> R program began. About 10 years ago the Board of Education changed bus routes in order to save money. This led to daycare centers losing access to bus routes, and therefore being unable to take care of children who were on those routes. At the time there were about 60 families who did not have access to after-school care. Mr. Favreau put together the 4<sup>th</sup> R program in response to this problem. There were about 100 children in the program at its beginning. The program has become very successful, and there are now about 343 children participating. The program is now over capacity.

Mr. Galligan mentioned a memorandum that had been sent out recently by Dr. Kate Carter, the Superintendent of Schools, regarding available space for the 4<sup>th</sup> R program. The space that was mentioned in the memorandum is classroom space, not recreational. Mr. Galligan said that this has been an issue for teachers in the past, as they have had to put their classrooms back in

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order after 4<sup>th</sup> R programs have been held there. In some of the schools, the art rooms or library have been used.

Mr. Galligan said that the 4<sup>th</sup> R program enforces a very strict 1:10 ratio of caregivers to children. The SW Recreation Department is certified by the Camping Association, and follows those guidelines as well.

Mr. Galligan asked about waiting lists for the 4<sup>th</sup> R program. Ms. Shelby Kosa gave the following numbers: Pleasant Valley has the longest waitlist, with 17 children on the morning waitlist and 42 on the afternoon list. Orchard Hill has 29 children on the morning waitlist and 25 on the afternoon list. Philip R. Smith has 2 children on the morning waitlist and 16 on the afternoon list. Eli Terry does not currently have a waitlist. Mr. Zimmerman asked for total enrollment numbers for those schools for next year's 4<sup>th</sup> R program. Ms. Kosa said that Eli Terry has 39 children enrolled in the morning session and 60 in the afternoon. Orchard Hill has 50 children in the morning session and 72 in the afternoon. PRS has 41 children in the morning session and 81 in the afternoon. PV has 46 children in the morning session and 70 in the afternoon.

Mr. Galligan mentioned that the change to all-day kindergarten put 63 more children into the system, and eliminating Wapping School brought five schools down to four. The children who had been attending 4<sup>th</sup> R at Wapping had to be integrated into the system. These factors have contributed to the size of the waitlists.

## ***Discussion – Possible Solutions for Before and After School Care***

Mr. Galligan said that either the capacity of the program has to be expanded, or other options can be explored. Mr. Galligan said that he has spoken to two organizations that are looking to expand care programs. One is the Avery Street Church, which is moving forward with plans for an after-school program, and the other is the Temple Beth Hillel Synagogue, which is looking to work with the Indian Valley YMCA to provide a care program. These two programs would cover the Pleasant Valley School and Philip R. Smith School districts. Mr. Galligan said that he has also been in contact with a company that wants to build a 15,000-20,000 sq. foot daycare center at Evergreen Walk. Mr. Galligan said that he and Mr. Favreau are also planning to contact the 16 daycare centers in the area that have bus route access.

Mr. Zimmerman asked if the synagogue YMCA program would include both before and after school care. Ms. Kosa answered that she has spoken with the executive childcare director of the Indian Valley YMCA, who told her that they would like to try and include both before and after school care in their program.

Mr. Galligan brought up the challenges that the Recreation Department has had with staffing the 4<sup>th</sup> R program. Ms. Kosa said that the Department has lost 22 staff members since July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Some losses have been due to employees moving on to full-time work. Other losses have been due to school schedule changes and conflicts with sports team schedules.

Mrs. Lydecker asked what qualifications the Recreation Department looks for in their 4<sup>th</sup> R program hires, as there seem to be very few successful candidates. Ms. Kosa explained that

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hiring is on a case-by-case basis. If a candidate is very qualified, they are considered even if they can only work a few days per week. If the department feels that the candidate will not be successful at working with children, this ultimately trumps the candidate's availability. Hires are trained on behavior management, individual anger management, and meeting program expectations. Mr. Galligan added that new hires also have to be trained in CPR.

Mr. Zimmerman asked if the waitlists are due to staffing issues and not space issues. Ms. Kosa confirmed that staffing is the main issue. It is more challenging to staff for morning care, as most staff members are high school students and cannot work mornings. Mr. Zimmerman asked if it would be possible to hire two more people for Pleasant Valley, in order to eliminate at least one waitlist. Ms. Kosa expressed her concern at the consistency of staff, due to the high turnover the program has experienced and the difficulty of filling morning positions. Ms. Kosa said that the program would like to stick to the sign-up limits that have been established, because allowing additional children beyond the limits would require more staff to be hired in order to maintain the 1:10 caregiver to child ratio. Mr. Galligan pointed out that there also needs to be enough staff to allow for one-on-one care for special needs children. Mrs. Lydecker asked if children with special needs are required to have one-on-one care from a paraprofessional, as they are when they are at school. Ms. Kosa explained that the program works with parents to determine the best course of action for the child's needs, and then provides one on one care if needed. The one-on-one care providers and the children receiving individual care do not count toward the 1:10 ratio for staffing.

Mr. Zimmerman asked how many staff members will be returning next year. Ms. Kosa answered that there are currently 12 full-capacity program leaders, 12 partial capacity program leaders, 1 one-on-one care provider, and 4 directors returning for next year. In order to run the program as it is set up now, 30 program leaders, 1 one-on-one care provider, and 8 directors are needed. Ms. Lydecker asked for a distinction between directors and program leaders. Ms. Kosa explained that directors are experienced senior staff who supervise the program leaders, plan activities, and are responsible for logistics and safety. Program leaders are responsible for direct care and facilitation of activities.

The lack of viable space for the 4<sup>th</sup> R program was discussed. Libraries, cafeterias, gyms, and art rooms at the four elementary schools are currently used for the program. Classrooms are less viable, as they require the teachers to rearrange their rooms to accommodate the groups. The program is already at full capacity for the available space.

The possibility of starting a separate program for the families who cannot get into the 4<sup>th</sup> R program was discussed. Councilor Paterna suggested the possibility of subcontracting with the YMCA. Mr. Favreau said that the Synagogue and the Avery St Church programs would take care of a large percentage of the waitlist. The Committee should look to help these programs get started, as it would help resolve the waitlist. Mrs. Lydecker expressed concern about the qualifications of the caregivers at the church program, as it would be run by church volunteers. Mr. Favreau said that the volunteers would have to be vetted and meet State standards.

The possibility of providing transportation to outside care programs was discussed. Mr. Zimmerman said that the dollar amount for bussing children to other caregiving programs was quoted to him at about \$181,000. The YMCA gave their own quote at about \$35,000-\$40,000.

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However, the actual amount may end up being different, as opening up transportation may lead to more demand. More buses may be needed, which would increase the cost. The \$181,000 estimate would be for providing three buses every school day. Mr. Zimmerman said that bringing back cross-district bussing could be an issue for taxpayers if it is provided by the Board of Education, as it would be benefitting privately funded daycares.

Mr. Galligan said that adding bussing for 453 children would increase participating families' bills by about \$33/month. If parents want the service, they should be willing to pay for it. Ms. Lydecker said that this is cheaper than paying for daycare, and that most families would be willing to pay the extra charge for transportation. Some families may want to have their children transported elsewhere, which would free up space in the 4<sup>th</sup> R program Ms. Kosa expressed concern that this would be unfair to families whose children are not being bussed elsewhere. Mr. Leone said that the transportation fee should only be charged to families that are using the service. Mr. Galligan said that having the Town pay for the service would increase taxes by a small amount, coming out to about \$1.69 a month per household.

Mr. Zimmerman said that by having the \$181,000 come out of the Board of Education budget, he is concerned that education programs would have to be cut to cover the cost.

Ms. Perry asked if the \$181,000 quote for the bus services would include one bus for each school. Mr. Zimmerman said it would not be one bus for each school. He added that if the Town is the entity providing transportation, the Town is required to provide services to any student, not just those on the waiting list.

Mr. Galligan opened the meeting for Public Participation. Councilor Lisa Maneely said that there are seniors in the town who do not have children, and are paying taxes that cover services they do not use. If the Committee compromises with the people who want to expand 4<sup>th</sup> R, it sends the message that any time there's a program that people want to be part of, all they have to do is form a committee to get their way. The Committee needs to find a solution without impacting the taxpayers, because people may complain about paying taxes for services they do not use. The Town should not pay for transportation to outside programs. The 4<sup>th</sup> R program is cheaper than daycare, so there will be more demand and the waitlist will not be solved.

Mr. Galligan said that he and Mr. Favreau had talked about using the old Wapping School building to house a program for the people on the waitlist. Bussing was an issue, as it would involve transporting children from all different school districts there and back.

Mr. Toby Lewis said that the Avery Street Church has a policy of performing background checks for any person who will be taking care of children for the Church programs. The Church has not made official plans for the program yet, and the State would still have to approve them.

Councilor Mary Justine Hockenberry said when there are children in the Town, everyone raises them. When there are seniors in the Town, everyone raises them also. Residents pay taxes for senior services as well as for programs like the 4<sup>th</sup> R. It is an equal statement. Councilor Hockenberry suggested a per-person charge for the 4<sup>th</sup> R program based on whether a family needs bus services for their children or not. Projects like the Avery Street Church and the Temple Beth Hillel Synagogue programs should be considered long-term solutions. The

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charges should be applied to the families that want to move out of the 4<sup>th</sup> R program and have their child transported elsewhere. Councilor Hockenberry also mentioned the possibility of hiring subcontractors for before and after school care.

Councilor Janice Snyder asked if there could be a separate contract between the bus company and the Board of Education for the people who want transportation to daycares. The parents that sign up for the service would be charged accordingly. Councilor Snyder said that the Parks and Rec department should not have to be responsible for contracting other services if they are providing the program. The Board of Education should help out. Bus services are contracted for transportation to sports events, so they should also be available for daycare. Mr. Zimmerman said that transportation to sports events is paid for by the school, and is not a separate contract. Daycare transportation would require a contract, as well as a system for charging for the service.

Councilor Riley expressed concern that if Town funded bus transportation services, they would be required to transport children to private, home-run daycares as well as professional daycares. He also asked that the committee plan for future demand as well as for short-term solutions. The short-term solutions should not undermine the long-term solutions.

Mr. Galligan said that in other states, when a new school is built, community space is built in as well. It should be a consideration for future new schools, like Pleasant Valley. Mr. Zimmerman said that this had been a consideration for Orchard Hill, but there was not enough interest. The State did not approve any additional space in the new schools that have already been approved: Eli Terry and Philip R. Smith.

Councilor Paterna said that in this situation the need is so great that everyone in the community can coexist. Avery Street Church and the Synagogue are long term solutions, they will not be ready by September. A short-term solution needs to be found.

Mr. Anthony Leone said that the goal of the Committee is to make the transition from a short-term solution to a long-term solution. He asked if staff from the outside programs at Avery Street Church and the Synagogue could be subcontracted to assist the 4<sup>th</sup> R or a new program. They could be staff members in the schools while a long-term solution is worked on.

Mr. Galligan asked Mr. Favreau to get in contact with the Avery Street Church and set up a meeting to talk about the situation.

Mr. Galligan asked about starting a new program at Wapping School to accommodate the waitlist families. He mentioned the possibility of hiring Post Road Stages to bus the children on the waitlist, instead of contracting with the school bus company. Mr. Zimmerman said that this would be a simpler solution.

Ms. Kosa said that running a separate program at Wapping to accommodate the waitlist families would require more staff than the program currently has. Mr. Galligan said that the program would only be opened if staff could be obtained from the Avery Street Church program. Mrs. Lydecker expressed concern at the qualifications of the Avery Street Church staff members in comparison to the hiring standards of the 4<sup>th</sup> R program. Mr. Leone agreed, stating that parents

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may not want to bring their children to an outside program if they do not know what the vetting process is. Mr. Favreau explained that the Church and the Synagogue facilities and staff would have to be vetted according to State Law, and follow State regulations. The 4<sup>th</sup> R goes beyond these requirements in its hiring process because it is a recreation program, not childcare.

Ms. Lydecker asked if the Recreation Department programs could be expanded in general. Staffing would be easier because candidates would be offered more consistent hours. Ms. Kosa said that this would actually double the amount of staff needed. Where one person might have done just the two-hour morning and afternoon 4<sup>th</sup> R shifts, now there would need to be two people hired to each work half the day. It also would eliminate the job availability for high school students. Part-timers have to stay under a certain threshold for hours, so they would not be able to work both shifts. More staff would be needed to maintain the programs throughout the day.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held Wednesday, June 27<sup>th</sup>. There will be future meetings if necessary. A report is due to the Town Council by July 17<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Galligan asked Mr. Favreau to arrange a meeting with Rabbi Glickman (representing Temple Beth Hillel Synagogue) and a representative of the Avery Street Church.

Mr. Galligan also plans to speak with Post Road Stages, in order to provide them as an option for transportation.

Ms. Perry added that there may need to be another full-time staff member hired to help Ms. Kosa with any potential expansion of the 4<sup>th</sup> R, or the addition of other recreation programs.

Mr. Lewis said that having Rabbi Glickman at the planned meeting with Avery Street Church, Mr. Favreau, and Mr. Galligan seems inappropriate, as Rabbi Glickman is a Council member. Mr. Galligan said that the Town Attorney has ruled on this and deemed that there is no conflict.

## **4. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Samara Haddock  
Recording Secretary