

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

**MINUTES
SPRENKEL ROOM**

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**REGULAR MEETING
July 17, 2019**

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:30 pm.

2. Roll Call

Members Present

Tiffany Caouette, Principal of Pleasant Valley Elementary School/Superintendent's Designee
Audrey Delnicki, Town Council
Raymond Favreau, Director of Parks and Recreation
Michael Maniscalco, Chairperson/Town Manager
Shelby Kosa, Recreation Supervisor/Director of 4th R Program
Anthony Leone, Resident/Parent
Karen Lydecker, Town Council
Vanessa Perry, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Human Resources

Members Absent

Jason Meade, Resident/Parent

3. Approval of Minutes – April 11, 2019

Mr. Leone made a motion to approve the minutes of April 11, 2019. Mr. Favreau seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously, with Ms. Caouette, Councilor Delnicki, and Councilor Lydecker abstaining.

4. New Business

General Discussion and Updates

Ms. Kosa gave an update on the YMCA program at the former Mother Goose facility. They will acquire a van to provide transportation, and they do have open spots in the program.

The Committee briefly discussed Educational Playcare. The company's application to the Planning & Zoning Commission was denied. Educational Playcare has filed a lawsuit against the Planning & Zoning Commission for the denial.

Mr. Leone asked for an update on the YMCA program at the Avery St. Church. Mr. Favreau said that the church and the YMCA are still negotiating, and will not be ready for September. The church still has not yet received a memorandum of understanding from the YMCA, so a vote has not been held. The two groups must pursue these discussions. The Town has no authority to negotiate in this matter. Mr. Favreau mentioned the future Evergreen Walk child care facility. Councilor Lydecker said that this will be for the Orchard Hill district. She also said that Mr. Galligan had previously mentioned plans to look at two additional sites within the Pleasant Valley district that could be offered to Educational Playcare, in lieu of the Ellington Road site.

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Mr. Leone asked for the 4th R waitlist numbers. Ms. Kosa said that the program is full at all four schools. At the time of this meeting, the waitlist numbers were as follows:

School	AM Waitlist	PM Waitlist
Eli Terry	6	31
Orchard Hill	13	24
Pleasant Valley	1	18
Philip R. Smith	3	31

New housing developments are a likely cause of the large waitlist increase in the Eli Terry district. Councilor Lydecker asked how the new 4th R registration day lottery method worked out. Ms. Kosa said that it was successful and expedient.

Ms. Caouette estimated that after the late July and early August registration rush, there may be up to 600 students enrolled in Pleasant Valley. She expects that the waitlist for 4th R will therefore increase. Mr. Leone asked to revisit the topic of allocating additional space in the schools for a 4th R program. Mr. Favreau said that the agreement between the Recreation Department and the Superintendent's Office was that classrooms were not available for 4th R use. Ms. Caouette said that she is willing to give up space at Pleasant Valley, and she thought that the other schools were of the same understanding. Mr. Favreau requested that the minutes from previous meetings be checked to clarify what the Superintendent had said.

Mr. Leone said that the Committee has been active for a year, with no progress shown. The charge of the committee was to find a short-term and a long-term solution to the childcare needs of South Windsor. The solutions attempted by the Committee relied on the private sector, for example Educational Playcare and the facility at Evergreen Walk. Mr. Favreau said that there was progress made, that unfortunately failed. The Temple Beth Hillel YMCA project fell through, as did the Educational Playcare project. The Town is not in control of the private sector.

Councilor Lydecker said that the Superintendent could have been contacted prior to the meeting to resolve the matter of classroom space. Mr. Favreau said that the focus of this Committee was not to be on expanding the 4th R, and so he and Ms. Kosa were not anticipating that it would be a topic of conversation at this meeting. Mr. Leone said that he is not revisiting expanding the 4th R, but rather suggesting that a separate program be created under the Recreation Department. If the program is Town-run, it can be controlled. He acknowledged that the Committee has tried to find solutions. Mr. Leone said that the message to the Committee from Town staff so far has been to wait for the private sector to solve the problem. He said that Committee members are not being given information unless they ask the right questions at meetings, and that they go months without hearing updates from Town staff.

Chairman Michael Maniscalco said that it may be a good idea to look into another program. Mr. Maniscalco said that he is willing to have discussions with Town staff to see how this could be done, and he will report back to the Committee. He also will ask the Superintendent to clarify her stance on the 4th R classroom space matter.

Ms. Perry expressed concern that one program would not hold children's attention for the 3-4 hour time span of after-school care. There may need to be other options available during this

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time. Councilor Lydecker said that the Mad Science program offered at Pleasant Valley on Wednesday afternoons runs from 12:45 pm - 3:20 pm. Her children enjoy the program and it keeps their attention.

The Committee discussed logistics of space and staff. Ms. Kosa said that there needs to be someone responsible for planning and organizing outside programs at the schools. She does not feel that she personally can dedicate the proper amount of time to this while also maintaining her other duties. Mr. Leone said that additional staff should be hired to assist with this. Ms. Caouette said that there is space available at Pleasant Valley. Recreation programs could be held in the cafeteria, and art/science programs in the classrooms.

Councilor Lydecker expressed concern about the budget, as there is no money currently allotted to Parks & Recreation for hiring another full-time staff member. Ms. Perry said that the funds would have to be taken from other accounts. Councilor Lydecker asked if it could be paid out of the revenue that the program generates. Ms. Perry said that it could, but it would drive up the cost of the program. Contracting programs would also drive up the cost. Mr. Favreau said that the cost of these contracted programs averages at about \$20/hour.

Ms. Perry said that the Committee has learned in the past that many people are on the waitlist because they prefer the 4th R program, not because they need it. Ms. Kosa said that she has not been receiving calls from families inquiring about waitlist progress, like she has in the past. She said that this does not necessarily mean that people do not need the program, but they most likely do have other care options. Mr. Leone said that on social media families are looking for other care options because they know they cannot get into 4th R. Mr. Favreau said that families on the waitlist have been encouraged to seek alternate care. Ms. Caouette said that she has made an effort at Pleasant Valley to provide child care options for families. She also gives them a list of child care centers in Town that provide transportation from the school. Mr. Leone said that while Ms. Kosa may not be hearing from families now, it may become more of a problem as the population continues to grow. Councilor Lydecker said that she heard from many parents who were upset that Educational Playcare's application was denied, and that those families do not want to even try for 4th R. She said that the lack of calls inquiring about 4th R may be because families have given up on the program.

Mr. Favreau agreed that the population increase is a problem that will not be going away. He feels that the Recreation Department cannot be the answer to that problem. There is not enough space or staff to take care of the current waitlist, let alone the future increased waitlists. There has to be another solution, which is why the Town has been leaning on the private sector. Councilor Lydecker said that Recreation can be a solution while they wait for the private sector, they just have to figure out a way to get an additional program into the schools. Mr. Leone said that since the department currently cannot take on extra programs, they need to add staff to address the problem. Mr. Favreau said that he would like to confirm that extra space will be available for program use before taking steps to hire extra staff. He does not want to put the Town in a risky situation. Mr. Leone mentioned an idea brought up at previous meetings: to provide a stipend to teachers who are willing to work extra hours to staff the programs.

Mr. Maniscalco suggested that they examine the cost of running another program through the Town. Mr. Favreau said that if a space commitment is given by the Superintendent, then he is

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willing to look at another program. Mr. Favreau asked Ms. Kosa for the total number of children on the waitlist. Ms. Kosa estimated 120 children, representing 80 families. Mr. Favreau said that he was under the impression that the Committee had already run through the exercise of determining the cost of an extra program, and that the Board of Education was not interested in managing any after-school programs. Mr. Favreau said that the Recreation Department had already reached out to paraprofessionals to determine if they were interested in after-school work, but did not receive any applications. Ms. Caouette said that the pay rate being offered by the Recreation Department was not enough. Ms. Caouette said that if insurance and Board of Ed fees are fixed rates, and Recreation is taking on more income from having more program participants, then they could possibly offer higher pay rates. Mr. Favreau said that labor costs are already increasing to allow for the minimum wage increase passed by the state. Ms. Caouette said that program rates may then have to be increased.

Ms. Perry asked if the staffing matter could be discussed internally between herself, Mr. Maniscalco, Mr. Favreau, and Ms. Kosa. Mr. Maniscalco agreed, and suggested that the Committee meet again in a few weeks for updates. He would like to determine what it would cost to run another program through the Recreation Department. He will present the numbers to the Committee, and they can determine if this is a program they wish to support.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Samara Haddock
Recording Secretary