

Franklin Lakes Municipal Alliance Meeting Wednesday, January 6, 2016

In Attendance:

Thomas Altonjy, Jennie Ballas, Frank Bivona, Peter Caride, Joseph Collins, MaryBeth Como, Janice Czelusta, Claudia Dargento, Bob Davidson, Melanie DeFazio, Melissa Ferro, Michael Goldberg, Det. Sgt. Jeff Jost, Taso Katopodis, Joseph Kelly, Allison Larson, Rachel Lohman, Beverly MacKay, Becca Magnusen, Liz Morris, James Peoples, Laurie Restieri, Sue Spagnuolo, Henry Wasserstein

Meeting was called to order at 9:40 a.m. Henry Wasserstein welcomed everyone, noting the presence of several first-time attendees and asked all attendees to introduce themselves.

Report on Heroin Initiative – Mayor Frank Bivona

Mayor Bivona reported on the recent drug statistics in Franklin Lakes (29 overdoses, 4 deaths, 5 Narcan saves). He stated that he wants to deal with the problem more proactively, working through the auspices of the Franklin Lakes Municipal Alliance. He stated that he would like to accomplish all of the following:

Drug Abuse and Mental Health Programing and Education

- Initiatives Proposed for this Year:
 - Two major FLOW High School Programs for students and parents (Hidden in Plain Sight for parents on March 22, 2016 and Chris Herren presentation for students and parents on October 3 and 4, 2016).
 - Two events at FAMS (Stephanie Reifman H.A.P.P.Y. Week Program presented on October 29, 2015 and Living Lessons in May 2016) plus FAMS parents attendance at High School parents' programs.
 - Two events sponsored by Franklin Lakes Library.
 - Stigma Free Training (one all-day event already completed on October 20, 2015; another event contemplated).
 - Mass mailings and email blasts.
 - Publicizing police program to assist in obtaining treatment, rather than prosecution, for drug abusers (and their families) who seek such assistance.

Expansion of Resources

- Creation of a \$75,000 pool of funds to be raised from the Borough of Franklin Lakes, schools, PTAs, Board of Health, Library, etc. (Currently, the Municipal Alliance receives approximately \$9,800 from the State and \$2,400 from the Borough.)
 - Funding would be used to pay for programs like the Chris Herren presentation and other programs for which a substantial cash expenditure is required and to pay for programs that do not, for various reasons, fall specifically within GCADA (Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse) guidelines but are consistent with dealing with alcohol, drug and related problems.
 - Funding would also be required to hire a part-time resource to act as a confidential support contact for addicts and/or their families who are attempting to deal with drug abuse issues.

Enactment of Legislation

- Supporting legislation that would require counseling before release of drug abusers who have been revived by Narcan.

Hidden in Plain Sight Program – Henry Wasserstein

Henry Wasserstein reported that as part of the Mayor's initiative, the Mayor, Janis Ing Strauss and Henry attended a meeting with the Franklin Lakes Board of Health which was also attended by representatives of the Bergen County Board of Health. As a direct result of that meeting, the Franklin Lakes Municipal Alliance was asked to sponsor a County-wide program entitled "**Hidden in Plain Sight.**" The program will be co-sponsored by the Bergen County Municipal Alliance Program, the Ramapo Indian Hills Regional High School District, the Oakland Municipal Alliance, and the Township of Wyckoff.

The program will take place on March 22, 2016 at Indian Hills High School. (The event is tentatively scheduled for 7:00 p.m.) It will be for adults only; individuals under age 18 will not be permitted to attend. A teenager's bedroom will be recreated on the stage of the High School Auditorium. The room will contain every-day type items that are used by teenagers to hide alcohol and drug-related paraphernalia. There will be a discussion of these items, followed by a presentation by Ramsey Police Officer Tim Shoemaker on current drug trends in Bergen County. There will also be resource tables available for attendees who are seeking information to deal with alcohol or drug issues in their homes. The program will receive County-wide publicity and will require very little cash outlay by the Municipal Alliance. Attached to these minutes is the Save-the-Date flier that was previously distributed. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

Status of 2015 Spending – Liz Morris

Municipal Alliance Coordinator Liz Morris reported that any requests for funds should be made promptly. Joe Collins asked for funds for the Indian Hills Junior Prom bus transportation in any amount that can be spared. The request was taken under advisement.

Vaping Marijuana – Bev MacKay

Bev MacKay reported on a new phenomenon involving the use by students of e-cigarettes to vaporize marijuana. The gas that is released is colorless and does not have the characteristic marijuana smell (although it does set off school smoke detectors). Jeff Jost explained that THC is extracted from marijuana leaves and converted into an oil. It is then placed into a vape pen and gives the same marijuana high when vaporized. Because of its non-marijuana scent, it is much more difficult to detect. When law enforcement officers test the oil and THC is found, the user is charged with illegal use of marijuana. Claudia Dargento explained that the vape pens look like any other pens and can be very pretty, sometimes costing hundreds of dollars.

Recent Events – Det. Sgt. Jeff Jost

Jeff reported that juvenile crimes were "quiet." He also announced his retirement from the Franklin Lakes Police Department, effective January 29, 2016.

Living Lessons – Sue Spagnuolo

Sue Spagnuolo reported that FAMS will be having its Living Lessons program on May 19, 2016. This program, which is put on bi-annually, consists of a day of workshops and assemblies designed to help students learn important life lessons, including taking responsibility, learning

respect and practicing self discipline. In past years, programs have featured presentations on drunk driving, sexting, drug abuse, bullying, surviving after devastating injuries and various other themes. Henry Wasserstein reported that Principal Keiser had requested \$1,500 for a Living Lessons presentation by the Tyler Clementi Foundation on bullying. Henry stated that he had asked for and received a \$500 donation from the Woman's Club of Franklin Lakes and that the Municipal Alliance would be donating the remaining \$1,000. (Tyler Clementi received nationwide attention when he committed suicide by throwing himself off the George Washington Bridge after he had been bullied by his Rutgers roommate regarding his homosexuality. His roommate was subsequently convicted on Federal bullying charges.) Bev Mackay reported that the Tyler Clementi Foundation will also be coming to both High Schools on January 18, 2016.

Chris Herren Presentation and Project Purple Overview – Henry Wasserstein, Claudia Dargento and Melissa Ferro

Henry discussed Chris Herren's background as a Falls River MA High School basketball star, his college basketball career both at Boston College and Fresno State, his pro-basketball career with the Denver Nuggets and the Boston Celtics, his subsequent opioid and heroin addictions and his rebirth as an incredible motivational speaker on drug and heroin abuse. Herren last appeared at Ramapo and Indian Hills High Schools in 2012 and will be coming back in October 2016 to present daytime programs for the students at the two High Schools and an evening program for parents at Indian Hills. The cost of the programs is \$15,000 plus expenses. Henry explained that there were might be issues as to whether the Municipal Alliances would be able to contribute to the cost, but that he believed they would be worked out. Mayor Bivona stated that, one way or another, the money would be raised.

Claudia and Melissa stated that the Chris Herren Foundation started the Project Purple initiative to help raise awareness about bullying of non-drinkers and non-drug users for their abstention choices. The Project Purple Initiative was launched by Chris Herren in 2012 to break the stigma of drug addiction, to bring awareness to the dangers of substance abuse and to shed light on effective treatment practices. The concept was developed when Herren spoke at a high school where the front row of students were wearing purple shirts. After he shared his story, one of the purple shirted students stood up amid snickering and laughter and thanked Herren for validating the sober students of the school who each year take a pledge to not use drugs or alcohol. This act was the inspiration for Herren to begin the initiative. The Ramapo and Indian Hills High Schools will participate in Project Purple to perpetuate the message of the Herren presentation. There was a discussion about the possibility of funding at least a part of the cost of the program through the Education Foundations of the FLOW towns since Ramapo-Indian Hills does not have such a foundation.

Educating Elementary School Children and their Parents

A question was asked by Rachel Lohman about when drug and alcohol education should commence for elementary school students and their parents. It was the consensus of the group that parents should be encouraged to attend adult education programs regardless of the age of their children. However, it was agreed that elementary school students are too young for drug and alcohol education. Elementary school counselors reported that during Red Ribbon Week, fifth graders receive anti-cigarette smoking education. For the most part, however, the focus of such education is on healthy choices and coping mechanisms to help foster a culture where children can learn to cope without turning to other means like alcohol or drugs. Sue Spagnuolo reported that even in Middle School, a fine line is walked in health classes between teaching

about the dangers of alcohol and drugs and giving students information on subjects about which they have no knowledge that might lead them to experimentation. Rachel Lohman suggested that parents of younger students need to be educated about the dangers of having high school students in their homes (eg., as babysitters) and what clues of potential dangerous conduct to recognize.

Bev MacKay thanked Jeff Jost for all he has done for the High School District and Jeff received a standing ovation from all of the participants.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:48 a.m.

Proposed future meeting dates:

March 16, 2016

May 4, 2016