

**ENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2019**

A Special Meeting of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Ludwick in the Enfield Room of the Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut on Monday, March 18, 2019. The meeting was called to order at 5:57 p.m.

Present were Councilors Bosco, Cekala, Cressotti, Davis, Deni, Kiner, Ludwick, Muller, Sferrazza, Szewczak and Unghire. Also present were Town Manager, Christopher Bromson; Assistant Town Manager, Kasia Purciello; Town Attorney, Maria Elsdon; Director of Human Resources, Steven Bielenda; Director of Finance John Wilcox; Town Clerk, Suzanne Olechnicki

MOTION #4941 by Councilor Szewczak, seconded by Councilor Davis to go into Executive Session to discuss Personnel Matters, Pending Litigation and Real Estate Negotiations.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #4941** adopted 11-0-0 and the meeting stood recessed at 5:58p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Session of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Ludwick at 5:59 p.m.

Present were Councilors Bosco, Cekala, Cressotti, Davis, Deni, Kiner, Ludwick, Muller, Sferrazza, Szewczak and Unghire. Also present were Town Manager, Christopher Bromson; Assistant Town Manager, Kasia Purciello; Town Attorney, Maria Elsdon; Director of Finance, John Wilcox; Director of Human Resources, Steven Bielenda; Town Clerk, Suzanne Olechnicki

Chairman Ludwick recessed the Executive Session at 6:15 p.m., reconvened the Special Meeting at 6:16 p.m. and stated that during Executive Session, Personnel Matters, Pending Litigation and Real Estate Negotiations were discussed with no action or votes being taken.

The Special Meeting moved to the Council Chambers.

Also present for this portion of the meeting were Director of Development Services, Lauren Whitten; Deputy Director of Economic & Community Development, Nelson Tereso; Director of Youth Services Jean Haughey; Deputy Director of Social Services, Damian Humphrey

ENFIELD TOGETHER COALITION – STUDENT SURVEY DATA

Present for this item were Jean Haughey, Director of Youth Services; Joan Hoffman, Chair of the Enfield Together Coalition, Bonnie Smith, Contracted Evaluation Consultant for the grant.

Ms. Hoffman stated the mission of the Enfield Together Coalition is dedicated to reducing and preventing underage drinking and substance abuse in Enfield through raising awareness, education of parents and youth and enforcing underage drinking laws.

Ms. Smith stated surveys taken of students in Grades 6 through 12 show that marijuana is the number one substance used, followed by alcohol, e-cigarettes, binge drinking and gambling. She noted prescription drug and heroin issues are not commonly seen in this age group.

She noted surveys show middle school students are most likely to get their alcohol at home and high school students are most likely to get their alcohol from friends.

She stated at the middle school level, the lowest perceived harm is gambling, followed by marijuana, but at the high school level that moves a little where marijuana is perceived as the least harmful followed by gambling, and the highest perception of harm is heroin.

Ms. Smith stated they also look at parental and peer perception of approval or disapproval. She noted the middle school is consistent regarding substances and gambling, but at the high school level, marijuana is perceived as the most acceptable.

She stated e-cigarettes are used by high school students almost three times as much as traditional tobacco products. She noted the number one product put in the e-cigarettes is e-flavored liquids, followed by cannabis products, then nicotine products, and alcohol.

Ms. Smith then spoke about mental health indicators and surveys taken in 2015 and 2017. She noted there has been a slight increase between surveys at both the middle and high school level. She stated this is consistent with what has been seen in other communities. She noted they asked a suicide question, and there were more significant increases in this area between the two surveys with the most significant increase occurring in the middle school between 2015 and 2017. She stated this should be taken very seriously when they think about prevention initiatives.

Ms. Haughey stated several years ago the Town funded two clinical social workers, and since then they've been very instrumental in screening youth before someone is diagnosed with a disorder of substance addiction. She noted they want to catch these youth when they're starting to use because their outcomes for treatment is so much greater than someone who becomes diagnosed with addiction. She spoke about services offered through Enfield Youth and Family Services concerning counselling and case management and suicide prevention.

She stated their substance abuse initiatives are funded through a federal grant.

Ms. Haughey stated the Suicide Prevention Steering Committee is invested in broadening the scope of their work, and they would like to bring all the work together and bring all the funding streams together. She stated she is concerned about the uptick in depression and suicidality, and it's also a national trend even though substance use is going down. She noted there's some initial

research that the use of technology is disconnecting youth from those personal connections and relationships that are very important. She stated through research one of the best protective factors is strong connection to another adult.

Councilor Sferrazza agreed it's very important to educate the youth and use preventive measures before youth start using drugs. He voiced concern about the number one reason or causal factor, which is easy access and availability of substances. Ms. Haughey stated her belief that's one risk factor.

Councilor Sferrazza questioned whether Ms. Haughey finds it problematic that a bill is being introduced in Hartford to legalize marijuana to make it more accessible to adults. He noted in the presentation it was mentioned how parents view marijuana less a threat. He stated his understanding the earlier use of marijuana impacts worse outcomes and brain development.

Ms. Haughey stated she is concerned because research shows that when parents perceive something as harmless, youth's use goes up. She referred to a saying, "what parents condone easily, kids will do in excess". She stated such a law sends a message that marijuana is not harmful, and this worries her because it is known that marijuana is very harmful to the developing brain.

Ms. Haughey thanked the Police Department for all their work that supports Youth Services.

Councilor Unghire stated she attends many Youth Services meetings, and she recognizes how hard they work. She requested clarification on the "Handle With Care Program". Ms. Haughey stated they are committed to postvention for youth who have been exposed to trauma. She noted there are a lot of incidents where there's a traumatic event that has happened in the home, i.e., overdoses, domestic violence. She stated youth exposed to such traumatic events come to school with anxiety issues, and they need to be sure they're okay. She noted the Police Department started a "Fragile With Care" initiative. She stated if the police responded to a home where there was a traumatic event that children might be exposed to, they do a referral form indicating a child may need help, and the school does a follow-up with the child.

Councilor Cressotti stated he attends quite a few Enfield Together Coalition meetings, and he noted this committee does a fantastic job with all their programs. He noted they are addressing two important issues regarding anxiety and depression. He stated he's glad these areas will be focal groups. He thanked them for their hard work.

Chairman Ludwick stated he's disappointed to hear 85% of kids believe their parents won't be upset if they're using marijuana.

He questioned how they define good mental health. Ms. Haughey stated her belief good mental health is when youth have resilience to cope with things that life throws at them. She noted there are certain things that really impact children's resilience. She stated the strategies are very broad across all the ages. She noted what an older youth might need is different than a young one. She

stated through the Suicide Prevention Grant, they're helping children identify feelings and help them know they can go to someone if they're dealing with something difficult. She noted the schools are really invested in social, emotional learning and mindfulness and establishing peace corners, so they help children learn how to recognize and regulate their feelings. She stated this is very important at a young age. She noted as kids get older, mental health disorders are a reality, and there's a genetic component to that. She stated every child has a different set of life factors, circumstances, genetics and life experiences, and she believes it must be a whole understanding of what's going on with a child.

Chairman Ludwick questioned how they can get all this information out to the public, and Mr. Bromson stated he will place this on the Town's website.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #4942 by Councilor Muller, seconded by Councilor Deni to adjourn the Special Meeting.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #4942** adopted 11-0-0, and the meeting stood adjourned at 6:50 p.m.