

Community Services and Recreation

DRAFT MINUTES/APPROVED

To: Community Services Commission Members

From: Edward J. Swinkoski, Director of Community Services and Recreation

Re: Commission Meeting March 19, 2013

Meeting was called to order at 5:30pm.

Attendance:

Present: Kristen Brandt, Lou Criscuolo, Kim Karlin, Donna Malley, Chris Orris, Michelle Spader

Absent: Marc Fasano, Paul Kottage.

Staff: First Selectman, Michael J. Freda

Edward J. Swinkoski, Director of Community Services and Recreation

Maggie Goodwin, LCSW, Program Manager, Clinical Services, BHCare

Carla Riccio, Secretary

First Selectman Michael Freda and Commission Chair Donna Malley both welcomed newly appointed Michelle Spader to the Community Services Commission.

1. Acceptance of Minutes of the meeting held on February 19th, 2013:

Lou Criscuolo made a motion to accept the Minutes of the February 19th, 2013 meeting, seconded by Christine Orris.

2. Old Business

Child Abuse Awareness efforts discussion: In the Town's 2nd annual observance of Child Abuse Awareness Month in April, the Commission met to discuss and coordinate final details of the efforts that will be put forth this year.

Maggie Goodwin brought for distribution a wide variety of informational brochures published by the Connecticut Clearinghouse (*a statewide resource center for information about alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and related issues affecting mental health and wellness*) surrounding Child Abuse for distribution. Ms. Goodwin explained that while the Department of Children and Families (DCF) no longer has any officially printed brochures for distribution, they do welcome people to visit their website (www.ct.gov/dcf) as all this information is posted and available to print (including frequently asked questions, programs and services offered that all the different DCF offices take care of and the "Careline" to report anonymously any suspicion of abuse).

Ms. Goodwin explained that those individuals who work in the school systems and health clinics are referred as "mandated reporters," which means that if they have a suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected, they are obligated by law to report it to DCF. Mandated reporters are not responsible for determining if abuse is taking place, but reaching out to DCF that they have concerns.

Thus, Ms. Goodwin clarified that while North Haven Counseling Services operates in the capacity of being a resource for people to reach out for counseling services (i.e. family, substance abuse, mental health), residents should not call the North Haven Counseling Services office to report suspicions of abuse, however should call DCF directly. She explained that once a call of suspicion of abuse reaches

the counseling staff, then they (as mandated reporters) would be obligated to report it to DCF. Thus residents should call the DCF “Careline” to report suspected child abuse.

Chair Donna Malley also distributed to the Commission materials that she retrieved from the DCF website including Frequently Asked Questions about reporting Child Abuse and Neglect and Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect as well as the DCF Careline.

Carla Riccio reviewed with the Commission the action plan in promoting the Town’s support of April being Child Abuse Awareness month. The large sign that reads, *“April is Child Abuse Awareness Month; North Haven Stands up for Children”* that was created last year will once again be posted on the Community bulletin board on the Town green and will run the first and last weeks of April. Letter size signage will also be hung on the 4-sided posting board in front of the Town Hall and will run for the entire month.

Commissioners were each given ten color copies of this sign and have been charged to each find ten public locations in Town to hang these signs in order to create consistency of messaging and promoting further visibility of this initiative.

Another 100 pinwheels have been ordered and will once again be placed in the ground in front of the Main Town Hall Building. This “pinwheel garden” will also include a sign affixed into the ground that reads, *“These Pinwheels Represent Our Commitment to Happy, Healthy and Safe Childhoods.”*

It was discussed that posters will be hung in the following places in town: the main Town Hall building, Town Hall Annex building, Community Services office, Library, Recreation, Senior Center, and the various schools. Upon the suggestion of Chris Orris, Ms. Riccio is going to check into the feasibility of hanging a poster at the post office. Child abuse prevention materials that Maggie Goodwin reviewed with the Commission will be made available in the following locations: in the Community Services Office, Library, Senior Center, Recreation Center and a the various schools.

First Selectman Michael Freda began by acknowledging Col. Ray Fowler for his continued commitment on leading the Child Abuse Awareness initiative (who was present at the meeting). He also congratulated Mr. Fowler on receiving the Citizen of the Year award as a result of spearheading this Child Abuse Awareness initiative. Mr. Freda reiterated the Town’s continued commitment to provide ongoing continued support during April, throughout the year, and in the years to come. Mr. Freda also shared a personal account with the Commission about a close lifelong friend who most recently revealed that he was a victim of child abuse at a young age, and currently suffers from depression as a result of him being abused by his father as a child. Additionally, Mr. Freda went on to say that in light of the recent Newtown tragedy, and in light of more and more people coming forward who had been victims of abuse, we as a community are realizing that it is more important now than ever to promote Child Abuse awareness; these accounts all validate that the Town is on the right track in supporting this initiative.

Selectman Freda also reiterated the significance of having BHCare oversee and manage the Town’s Counseling Services and how beneficial it has proven. He explained how BHCare supports and augments the counselors who provide a wide variety of professional services for residents in need. This state recognized organization (BHCare) has brought a new dimension to our counseling services, specifically as they provide access to many resources across the state (the variety of materials that Ms. Goodwin brought for example).

3. Public Comment:

Col. Ray Fowler extended his appreciation and thanked the commission for stepping up their commitment from last year in this continued Child Abuse awareness efforts.

In response to Mrs. Karlin's question as to what type of data on referrals to DCF exist, Mr. Fowler shared that 13 cases of Child Abuse were reported in North Haven in 2012. Of those, 12 were investigated as serious incidents and 10 arrests were made (a 77% arrest record).

Mr. Fowler indicated that in speaking with Police Chief McLoughlin, the North Haven Police are committed to be exceptionally aware and on the lookout of child abuse during the month of April. Mr. Fowler also shared with the commission of his strides in spreading the word about this initiative including Kyle Swartz from the North Haven Citizen as well as his continued coordination of efforts with Superintendent Robert Cronin.

In appreciation of Mr. Fowler's efforts in making the community aware of Child Abuse, Donna Malley presented Col. Fowler with two lapel pins, each with a pinwheel inscribed, that commemorate Child Abuse Awareness. Mr. Fowler thanked the Commission.

4. Adjournment:

Christine Orris made a Motion to Adjourn, seconded by Lou Criscuolo. The meeting was adjourned at 5:50p.m. The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 2, 2013 at 5:30pm.