

**Metuchen Municipal Alliance Meeting**  
**Minutes from October 8, 2015**

**Attendance:** Shivangi Manivannan, Angela Yoa, Detective Kevin Doherty, Jackie Gibson (BoE), Lisa Freed, Carol Taylor (Chairperson of MHS Project Graduation), Jodi Kopac, Joanne Markano, Kathy Liss, Carol Volkland, Donna Jamison, Kris Dubon, Beatrice Moskowitz, Allison Inserro (Borough Council)

The meeting began at 7:35 pm.

- I. Introduction of guests and members
- II. The minutes from September were reviewed and approved.
- III. Guest Carolyn Taylor thanked the Alliance for the \$1,500 donation to Project Graduation 2016, and she described how PG raises funds in an effort to pay for the \$25,000 drug-free overnight event for approximately 760 high school seniors. PG gets donations from groups like the Alliance, through 50/50s at the Country Fair, an annual parent event like An Evening at the Races, etc.

The Alliance Committee explained that our support to PG could not come from our grant money because it is a one night event and also because it does not support our focus which currently is heroin and opiate addiction. However, the Committee is happy to support PG with monies we raise beyond the 25% match for the grant. We discussed a prospective joint program with PG for early in 2016 with a theme of underage drinking.

Some ideas were to host a forum on underage drinking. We could have a panel with a lawyer and/or detective updating parents about the legal ramifications of serving alcohol to underage individuals, a representative from MADD, a representative from one of two organizations that are advocating for lowering the drinking age, a representative from a local college to discuss the dangers of binge drinking on college campuses. The purpose of this forum on underage drinking would be informative, as well as to encourage discussion between adults and students in our community around the controversial issues surrounding the very real dangers of underage drinking.

- IV. Kathy reported from Audrey Hauser (MHS PTO President) that the PTO will host a Health Fair on Tuesday October 27 from 6:30 pm until 8:30 pm. The Alliance was asked to have a table to distribute information. Kathy and Lisa will attend.
- V. Lisa updated us on the fundraiser she is coordinating with Sakula Yoga on Main Street with Project Graduation's participation. The event will be held on the afternoon of Sunday January 31. It will be a free class open to Metuchen High School students and their parents who may benefit from the stress and anxiety reduction of yoga. The

event will be advertised in the Principal's monthly newsletter, the Crit and other local media. Sakula is donating their time, space and teacher; and any donations collected from the class's participants will go to the Alliance. Lisa will create and share a flyer at the next meeting. Lisa asked for the Committees participation in the event.

VI. Danielle - treasury report – was e-mailed from Danielle during the meeting because she was running late, however, was not reviewed in Danielle's absence. Will review next meeting.

VII. Jodi's Report:

**Country Fair - surfing with MMA theme**

- Need volunteers
- donations received: 6 flags tickets, Jenkinson's Boardwalk ride gift card, stuffed animals
- bought taffy for boardwalk games
- Booth will promote Strengthening Families Program ...
- Booth will have 2 Boardwalk games with drug/alcohol related questions

County reimbursed the Borough for Q4 reporting except for 9 cents, which means entire year 2014/2015 has been approved, reimbursed and finalized.

Jodi working on the Grant quarterly report for Q1 (Jul 1 – Sep 30) due 10/14/15

All vendors were paid for national night out

Jodi met with Barbara Stevens at St. Francis Cathedral School regarding Forrest Friends. The contract for NCADD to run the program has been signed. The program will be presented to the two classes of first grade students on Thursdays starting on Thursday 10/29 through 12/10/15 excluding Thanksgiving Day. This meets the obligation to our current grant cycle

A few weeks ago, NCADD of Middlesex County changed their name to The Wellspring Center for Prevention. All services will remain the same.

YSB received a \$50 donation from First Presbyterian Church. Jodi gave to Danielle for deposit.

Thank you notes for donations, keep for your tax records must be mailed out soon.

VIII. The bylaws from 2013 need to be updated annually and sent to the county for approval.

The county issues a general template but the template needs to be individualized to reflect each Committee's needs. Kathy and Carol worked on updating the bylaws in September and presented the changes for discussion tonight. Committee members received suggested changes for their review via email. One change would be a

proposed distinction between active members and inactive members (those who have not attended 2 of the last 3 meetings) and their ability to vote.

Council woman Inserro noted that the 2013 bylaws were out of compliance with an ordinance that stated that the Alliance would only consist of 15 members. She will send the draft to Dennis Murphy, the town lawyer, as well as the mayor for their review. Ms. Inserro will report back on her findings at the November meeting. After the bylaws are approved on the municipal level, they will need to be approved by the county.

- IX. There was a discussion of the possibility of changing the Committee's focus from heroin and opiate abuse to something else for the next grant cycle. Not many were in favor of keeping the current focus because it seems to not be the most prevalent problem in our community. Many thought alcohol and marijuana abuse were more prevalent. Some suggested that "gateway drugs" to include the above and prescription drugs would be more inclusive and allow us to cover more ground with our grant money. Another general suggestion was healthy lifestyle. Two people felt that although heroin was not our most prevalent problem, it is the most destructive problem. Someone suggested that we keep in mind that whatever focus we decide upon that we try to stay relevant to the perceived needs of the community so that we reach an audience. It was also noted that we can utilize additional programs outside of our Grant obligations that do not address our focus by using money that is raised above our mandatory 25% match of the State grant. In the end, we decided to table the discussion until next month.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 pm. The next meeting will take place on Thursday November 12 at 7:30 pm.