



## Meeting Minutes for May 27, 2025

Members and Staff in Attendance: Tim Keeney, Dr. Sam Galloway, Gail Tishler, Kassie Mashiak, Joanne Nichting, Margot Martello, Kim Littig, Pastor Scott Spence, Arianna Flagg, Jen Griger, and Matthew Cox

Call to order by Matthew Cox at 10:35 a.m. in the Youth Programming Classroom at Kibbe Fuller, 619 Main St.

Meeting Minutes: Matthew presented minutes from the March 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, and notes from the April 22 meeting, which did not have a quorum present. Kassie moved and Gail seconded a motion to approve the minutes presented. There being no discussion, the motion carried.

Drug free Communities Grant Updates: Arianna reported that the spring National Drug Take Back event was held on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at the Somers Fire Department. She thanked Somers Police and Fire Departments for their continued support and help with the event, which recorded approximately 40 pounds of pills, and 6 pounds of needles collected. She also reported that May has been tremendously busy with events and activities related to National Mental Health Month, National Prevention Week, and other school-based activities. During National Prevention Week, members of Somers Youth for Change (SYC) leadership council staged daily activations during lunch waves at the high school. The group created and implemented a variety of games and other engaging activities around prevention and substance use knowledge. Between 60 and 90 students participated each day. This was also a great recruitment opportunity to engage more students in the work of SYC, and 8 new sign-ups were recorded. Margot reported that the middle school hosted its annual walkathon on Friday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, with proceeds benefiting HARC, a statewide social services organization dedicated to providing support services, day programs, respite care, employment readiness, and life enrichment activities for people with disabilities. She and Arianna reported that the parent event held on May 20<sup>th</sup> was a facilitated discussion about coming changes to the District's student cell phone policy in conjunction with educational clips from the three-part film series Screenagers. As part of the conversation, Margot shared with parents the District's communications protocols in times of emergency, and the safety issues possible if, during a drill or an actual emergency, students are distracted by cell phones, possibly missing crucial safety instructions from staff. Arianna invited those present to participate in an upcoming QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide education and prevention training, which will engage participants in education about current best practices when confronted with people possibly considering self-harm. The training will be held on June 11. Please contact Arianna for information or to sign up. Arianna continues to partner with Somers Police to plan the Third Annual National Night Out event, to be held the first Tuesday in August.

### Youth Service Bureau Updates:

Jen reported that she has received a significant number of new truancy referrals recently and that most are trauma involved, with additional complications such as substance use, poor academic performance, etc. She is working closely with middle and high school leadership as she meets with youth and families, and works to ensure a strategic, streamlined approach. On May 21 she attended an excellent training course on School Avoidance. She also reported that the collaboration with Somers Public Library on the Teen Center continues to be a popular, positive, and engaging opportunity for youth 12 years and up. The Teen Center will go on hiatus after the school year ends, but Library staff will offer periodic pop-up style opportunities. It was also noted that Back-to-School planning and fundraising would begin shortly after the school year ends.

### Old Business

Matthew reported that the second biennial Youth Voices Count Survey was successfully administered on April 2 at the middle school and on April 23 at the high school. Approximately 90% of students in grades 7 through 12 participated. Reports and slide decks on the data analyzed have been received and will be shared with SHINE members by our data consultants, B. Weyland Smith, LLC, at the next regularly scheduled coalition meeting on June 24, from 10:30 am to 12

noon, in the Blake Room at the Somers Public Library. A separate presentation will be provided to school leaders at a date and time to be determined.

Matthew also reported that in support of our stated goal to recruit more Somers residents and business owners to serve in advisory capacities that he, Jen, and Arianna, met with several local residents and business owners who are interested in getting more involved in working with programming to benefit our youth by serving on the SHINE Coalition or the Youth Service Bureau Advisory Board. Margot noted that a teacher/parent had recently expressed interest as well. Matthew agreed to follow up. It was also noted that those in roles of parent and youth are greatly needed for both groups. To meet funder requirements, youth must be current students in Somers schools but can be up to age 21 for the YSB Advisory Board. Sam suggested talking with Chief Lenart with the Somers Fire Department as they had recently talked about reinvigorating a cadet program through the high school.

Tim announced that at the upcoming Board of Selectman meeting on June 5<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, the Board would consider a proposal to purchase the former Somersville School, to be used as office and program space for town programs such as Human Services, Recreation and Leisure, Veterans Affairs, the HS Transition program, Teen Center, etc. He encouraged all to attend the meeting and to support the effort.

Pastor Scott that on June 8 at 11am the Somers Congregational Church would host their annual picnic at Connor's Place at Field Road Park, all are welcome! He also noted that Vacation Bible School would be held August 4 to 8 and that sign-ups will begin soon. There is room for up to 40 children, but the spots fill up quickly.

With no further business or announcements, Margot moved, and Sam seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:25 am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Matthew Cox