

Island County Children's Commission
July 10, 2008 Meeting
Minutes

Present: Janice O'Mahony, Cynthia Shelton, Rod Merrell, Kate Grossman, Mark C. Brown, Hillary Mellish, Sandy Ziemer, Tomi Whalen, Carol Stillian, Patty Page, Paty Williams, Dave White, Peggy Dyer, Kristin Lasher, Kristina Saunsaucie

Absent: Colleen Bowls, Bess Windecker-Nelson, Margie Forbes, Fran McCarthy

Guests: Mike Merringer, John Luvera, Reanne Lee, Randy Lee, Suzanne S. Bond

Staff: Dan N. Bond, Keith Higman

This meeting of the Children's Commission was opened by Chair, Carol Stillian, at approximately 4:30 PM.

Following introductions, Janice O'Mahony offered the Opening Thought for the day. Janice shared a number of humorous things that children and youth are quoted as having given as answers on a test. The quotes demonstrated how children and youth see things differently than adults – and often in very funny ways.

The minutes from the June 5th meeting were approved as written.

Logo Contest Award

The Executive Committee Report was deferred until later in the agenda, to allow time for the presentation of gifts, a certificate and profound appreciations to our Design-a-Logo contest winner, 16 year old Reanne Lee. Reanne was accompanied to this meeting by her father, Randy Lee. The presentation of the award was done by youth Children's Commissioner, Hillary Mellish. Reanne received a Certificate of Award, and an Island Gift Pack, containing several gifts and gift certificates. Pictures were taken by Suzanne Bond and Paty Williams. These pictures will be sent to local newspapers along with articles written for publication.

Special Presentation

The next order of business was a presentation on Juvenile Justice given by Janice O'Mahony and Mike Merringer. Janice is the very recent past-Chair of the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, and Mike is the Juvenile Court Administrator for Island County.

Janice provided s historical perspective on Juvenile Justice from the time that the first Juvenile Court was established in the United States in Chicago in 1899, until present day. She spoke of the paradigm shifts, and the key, and often controversial, policy changes that have occurred along the way. Some areas of controversy that remain to this day include how to respond to rebellious youth who have not committed a crime, and the role of sentencing – accountability and/or treatment. Other “hot issues” include gangs, mental health issues of youth detainees, disproportionate minority contact in the system, and the new brain research and its applicability to the juvenile justice arena.

Mike reported on the state of affairs at Juvenile Court and Detention in Island County – what is happening locally. In Island County, there are three Juvenile Probation Counselors, each of whom carries approximately 20 cases each. State-wide, and nation-wide, this is an enviable scenario. Youth are found guilty or not guilty of offenses by the Court, and the Probation Counselors utilize a risk assessment process to assign sanctions for those found guilty. The current detention facility has 21 beds and on any given month there have been between 4 and 10 youth being detained. Mike supplied the Commission with a very recently completed Annual Report, depicting all aspects of how the Juvenile Court and Detention operate, programs offered, utilization rates and outcomes.

Committee Reports

Nominations/Development: No report at this time

Public Relations: Sandy shared a list of upcoming events, county-wide, where the Children's Commission could have a booth, or a presence. Lists were sent around and members were encouraged to sign up to participate in these events. The P.R. Committee will follow up with members who sign up.

Paty agreed to Chair the P.R. Committee, and Sandy, then, is freed up to Chair the Legislative Committee. There will need to be a decision made as to who will take the helm of the Data Committee filling the void left by Paty's move.

Legislative Committee: Sandy will be Chairing this Committee. Formal connection to the Children's Alliance will need to be made.

Executive Committee: This Committee report was a discussion of the August 18th update to the Board of Health (BOH). This update has increased significance because it is the last time that we have an opportunity to speak with the County Commissioners before they begin their budget deliberations. A proposed outline was passed out, reviewed and discussed briefly. We are proud of our accomplishments to date and excited about our potential. The task will be to instill in the County Commissioners the same sense of pride and excitement. We will be creating a power point presentation to accompany those of us who will be speaking on the 18th. We need Study Groups to provide information to Dan regarding their work, which can be reduced to power point. We also need as many Children's Commissioners as possible to attend the BOH meeting. Dan will be in touch with members about this, and we will discuss this upcoming event more fully at our next full meeting of the Children's Commission scheduled for August 7th.

Study Group Updates

0-5 Group: Dave reported that the 0-5 group, also calling themselves the Early Childhood Committee, have met with the Partners in Island County For Early Learning (PICEL), and that discussion has occurred regarding the plausibility of that group merging with the Children's Commission. There is some overlap between what the PICEL Group is working on, and some of the work of the 0-5 Early Childhood Committee of the Commission. A Grid was offered and reviewed, which outlines/exemplifies the results/outcomes of the 0-5 Group's work. This Grid will be sent out electronically to members. Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and approved that the Children's Commission extend an invitation to the PICEL Group to merge efforts. Dan will work with key Commissioners to draft such an invitation.

Primary Group: No report at this time. The Primary Group requests 15 minutes on the Agenda for the August 7th meeting to report out.

Secondary Group: This Study Group has drafted a letter to High School Principals regarding implementation of Focus Groups of youth within their schools. Additionally, this group is intending to go before various local Service Organizations with a survey instrument regarding what adults think about local youth. The topic will be around youth connectedness to community. Dan has agreed to create a small power point about the Children's Commission that could help with these mini-presentations.

There was a suggestion that we/members consider writing opinion articles for the papers on key children and youth topics. This will be discussed further.

There was no public comment.

Evaluation forms were sent around the table and collected by Dan.

Meeting adjourned.