

Ridgefield Youth Commission Meeting Minutes
October 6, 2021
7:00-8:00 pm
Location: Barn

Attendees

Mary Dougherty
Jim Yavenditti

Student Members
Ansh Suryananshi
Michael Stamatis
Julia Knispel
Skylar Kleiman
Diana Martsen

Boys and Girls Club Representative
Joe

- I. Meeting opened with a warm welcome to newly confirmed members Julia and Skylar. Then a brief discussion as to whether we should resume a zoom option in addition to our in person meetings. It was agreed upon to offer this for next time. Joe from Boys and Girls Club graciously offered to facilitate the virtual option.
- II. Youth Commission Web Site Status Diane M. reported that new design changes / content additions have been added. Credit card payment by the commission pending. Commission also has a goal to leverage social media to gain more exposure for the Commission and to get more students involved. Ansh has an Instagram Account reserved to launch when ready. Mike and Ansh have been added as Moderators on the Commission FaceBook Page.
- III. Mental Health as a topic was raised to gauge members interest in hosting a panel discussion for the community to create awareness of the challenges at our public schools. Students thought that such a discussion could be worthy and that Dr. Richard Bellin (counselor at the high school might be a good person to contact to get a feeling of what is happening and what messages the Youth Commission could communicate to the public.) There was a student comment that suggested the commission look at issues students are facing such as loss of work ethic /motivation after months working from home. There was a general feeling that students have an adjustment period upon returning to in person school and perhaps Youth Commission Programming could address this.
- IV. A possible December Fundraiser was discussed with a few ideas mentioned such as hosting an event at the barn for our scheduled December meeting or perhaps something at a local establishment if one would donate the space? There was great enthusiasm for

the idea of hosting a fundraiser at the Barn during the holiday stroll since the barn's location would be close to the crowds and the events happening at the Stroll. Diane is checking with Kids Rock about possible entertainment for such an event and Julia is checking with the Western Connecticut Youth Orchestra. There was general agreement about hosting the event on Friday evening and securing donations for food and raffle prizes. We agreed to revisit at our November meeting.

- V. The Moratorium on Marijuana Sales in our town and the eventual lifting of the moratorium as a topic was raised to gauge member interest in hosting a panel discussion for the community where different points of view including student perspectives were included. Other perspectives could be politicians, a doctor, police. A concern raised was that students could potentially have more access to the substance depending on its availability in town. Nobody in the room felt like they had sufficient expertise to address this question. Many were hesitant for the Youth Commission to take a lead in educating the town on this topic because it is a polarizing topic that has 'sides.' It was mentioned that the Youth Commission should shy away from controversial areas such as this. Jim Yaventti made a suggestion to perhaps structure an event around the role of local government/ BOE and have the lifting of the moratorium be an area that is addressed. Student concerns about the topic in general were that lifting the moratorium could give youth more access, could threaten the town's charm and could be a negative for our downtown. Although everyone admitted there was quite a lot to learn, the group seemed hesitant to create an event around this issue.

*No official votes were taken at this meeting

*Commission President Denise Qualey was absent for this meeting