

Youth Anti-Bullying Task Force

Meeting Minutes. February 27, 2020

Clerk's Conference Room – William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Hauppauge

Members Present: *Morgan Dunn, Bari Gruber, Melanie Clements, Devin Moore, Adrianna Romeo, Gianna Tantillo, Brook Weisberg, Emily Grieco.*

Others Present: *Joe Salamone, Derek Stein.*

Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:

Morgan Dunn made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Adrianna Romeo.

“Stop Bullying App” Discussion:

Derek Stein noted that the previous discussions about the app were very successful. Joe Salamone asked if it clarified the direction for the app. Adrianna Romeo stated that it was helpful seeing how it worked. Joe Salamone stated that he pitched it as a way for ideas to be cleared up.

Derek Stein reported he has not heard back from Will Thurman or Scott Mastellon. He expressed his disappointment in how this has played out since in November they were very eager back after meeting with Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory and the Task Force. Joe Salamone replied that he is also disappointed in the IT Department's response. He began the process with the thought that it could happen, therefore, the Long Island Coalition Against Bullying (LICAB) has earmarked the cost of the project in case it is not finished by the County. Regardless of whether or not it is done by the County, the project can be completed by LICAB, and the recommendations made by the Task Force will be considered. Joe Salamone stated that this ensures the Task Force doesn't meet monthly for no reason. Derek Stein agreed, and noted he had heard radio silence from the IT Department in the past month, and doesn't understand why or how this has become an issue. Joe Salamone stated he would have no issue bringing the County's failures to the Legislature if IT does not follow up.

Derek Stein also mentioned the attendance issue. The district offices have had a mixed track record. He noted Legislator Piccirillo called him Monday, when Emily Grieco had the wrong date, and that at times he asked District Offices to relay information to Task Force members to ensure good attendance.

Open Discussion:

Joe Salamone said that he had a few things to add. Unfortunately he did not bring the LICAB scholarship application with him, but it will be emailed out to the members. Currently, there are 75 applicants across Long Island. Joe Salamone added that he had spoken about the app to a school superintendent earlier today, who was supportive of the app, but did raise questions

about its functionality and having some questions on whether or not this would leave things open to lawsuits.

Recommendations & Summit Discussion:

Derek Stein noted that the next item came from the ultimate goal of the initial resolution: to create a list of recommendations to agencies explaining ways they could tackle bullying. He noted said the list of recommendations does not have to be limited to only suggestions of what the County could do, but can include State, Federal and local school district issues as well. He noted that the Superstorm Sandy Review Task Force's Report also made a list of recommendations.

Gianna Tantillo mentioned that her school district has introduced a Peer Ambassador programs where a group of about 30 student ambassadors are chosen based on recommendations from their teachers. The Peer Ambassadors help introduce new students to the school.

Bari Gruber stated that her school does is Peer Alliance week. Gianna Tantillo replied her school only has a Peer Alliance Day. During this time they put up little fuzzes and messages of support. Brook Weisberg stated that one thing do is they put up messages saying "You Matter" in the bathrooms and asked if that would be something they could recommend to schools. Derek Stein replied that it could be.

Joe Salamone asked how many of the student's schools took part in P.S. I Love You Day. Melanie Clements asked if that was when schools put post-it notes in the bathroom. Joe Salamone replied that he knows a number of schools put post-it notes on lockers. Brook Weisberg and others replied their schools did that as well. Emily Greico said her school had Brook DiPalma come in and speak. Joe Salamone said that he was supposed to see her that day, but couldn't because they were both bouncing around to different schools. Joe Salamone asked what each student's building tells them about what P.S. I Love You Day is all about? Brooke Weisberg stated her school's event is handled by an outside club. She noted they were putting up posters in the hallways and handing out flyers which read "Make Someone's Day" or other inspirational quotes, and since it was Valentine's Day, right before winter break and there was a fundraiser the same day the hallways were not very crowded. Gianna Tantillo stated that her school had counselors giving out suicide prevention bracelets but since it was also the last day before break and there was a threat made at the school it went under the radar. Morgan Dunn said her school had their choir go around and sing songs from *Dear Evan Hanson*. Joe Salamone said that is his favorite Broadway play, and asked if anyone hasn't seen it. Derek Stein replied that he had not seen it. Joe Salamone said that he loved the show, and left the show and immediately called his treasurer asking if they could give away 50 tickets and that he loved it. Morgan Dunn said her Latin teacher loved it. They took the students out to watch the songs where they listened to inspirational songs and where they played "You will be found" and that it was very emotional. Joe Salamone replied that's what it's supposed to be like since Brook's father did take his life, and although it started as suicide prevention awareness but has also taken influence from mental health care as well.

Joe Salamone mentioned that previous discussions focused on how teachers handle bullying. He noted that teachers have complete continuing education credits (CTLEs) so LICAB is going through the process of getting accreditation to provide CTLEs. LICAB will offer courses with information about the Dignity Act and how bullying has changed and how to think of bullying. He noted that while it is a tough project to get done, he feels that it will be ready to go at the start of the next school year. Devin Moore added that one of his anti-bullying laws he wants to see passed is a law that would teach teachers the variations between the different types of bullying. Devin Moore noted all you can do is teach someone and hope they put it into practice.

Gianna Tantillo mentioned that one of her friends put together a program Tune, Talk, Turn into a syllabus for middle school students, and noted that one way they can help to grow the program would be to expand. It is currently only in West Half Hollow Hills High School. The program is designed to help students go into Middle School. Brook Weisberg asked what are the three T's. Gianna Tantillo replied it is to take account of everything in your life and talk to either your peers or others going through a situation. The goal then is to get them to write three individuals who they can talk to, along with three teachers or guidance counselors. The counselors have said that the program is very successful and has been continuing for the past 3 or 4 years. Gianna Tantillo said she can bring more information about it to a future meeting. Derek Stein said that would be great. Joe Salamone said that he liked it and how it is a catchy, three step process.

Derek Stein asked if Dominic Armano could attend future meetings to help come up with ideas for the final recommendations. Joe Salamone asked the members if there were any ideas that they could find or see that are related to bullying that would be helpful. He asked for the members to find items that are byproducts of bullying that they can pick up on. Joe Salamone noted that the beauty of a recommendation list is that the problem of implementation belongs to someone else. Adrianna Romeo stated that her student government had a preliminary club put together called the "Random Acts of Kindness Club" which was prompted by issues they had seen with students not just bullying but simply being mean to each other. Joe Salamone asked if other student governments had been active in combating bullying. Melanie Clements replied that she felt at her school the student government was elitist, and did a lot of stuff to make themselves look nice. Adrianna Romeo replied that she's the President of her class so she's sad that is an issue in Melanie's school, since her student government has worked to improve student life at her school. Joe Salamone jokingly mentioned that your opinion might change when you have to plan your school reunion. Adrianna Romeo noted that she was only just informed of that if she wins the student election next year. Joe Salamone mentioned that it largely comes down to the people who put the most work in. He was initially asked to help plan it, but ultimately didn't go since he felt like he already talks to most of the people from high school that he wants to see.

Melanie Clements stated that the one major inclusive thing the student government did was create a Gay-Straight Alliance Club, helped one of her friends come out as trans. Joe Salamone asked if each of their schools had a GSA chapter. The members all stated they had a GSA at their schools. Melanie Clements noted that her school's GSA had a debate with a bible club. A handful

of members do not have bible clubs at their schools, but some do. Joe Salamone asked if any of the members had a GSA and a separate anti-bullying club. Emily Greico stated that her school has a Peer Assistance Club and Peers to Peers, which function as separate anti-bullying clubs. Adrianna Romeo noted her school has a separate peer support group and she was Vice President of the GSA at her school. Adrianna Romeo noted her school had some issues with the GSA being somewhat isolated from other clubs, so the school organized meetings between other clubs and the GSA. Joe Salamone stated he has long been opposed to anti-bullying clubs being merged into GSAs. Melanie Clements feels it could open people up to more bullying. Morgan Dunn stated that one reason they shouldn't be part of the same club is due to different issues that the two clubs cover.

Devin Moore stated his school has the Hart Group which he has been working with to bring attention to bullying in schools, so one idea would be to make their own interpretation of a bullying video in their schools. Emily Greico noted Peers-to-Peers has a program where sophomores and others are brought together to help them get introduced to High School. Her school also has one program where they play games as well. Joe Salamone said Morgan Dunn hit it spot on why a GSA should be a separate club, as the issue the GSA focuses on is teaching students about safe sex, and sexual identity, and not focus on bullying unless it relates to LGBTQA issues. He noted that the reason they are linked often is simply because of money, as teachers who supervise a club are paid more, so it is easier to pay one teacher to manage one club instead of two. Schools may also feel that since they are both buzz issues, they are linked. He noted that a student could also get bullied for associating with the GSA, even if they just wanted to help. Joe Salamone suggested that schools should adopt making the clubs separate. Morgan Dunn stated her school has the same advisor for both clubs, but a second advisor for the GSA. Joe Salamone noted that in West Babylon a club has two separate executive boards for their Peer Support group and the GSA but are managed by the same teacher. Joe Salamone suggested that someone who is struggling with coming out should not have to worry about a bullying issue where someone gets bullied due to their race. He noted he is just throwing out ideas to inspire the group.

Joe Salamone mentioned that LICAB has a community outreach fund which has previously been given to clubs, and would be willing to help Adrianna Romeo start up Random Acts of Kindness at her school. Emily Greico stated her school also has random-acts of kindness days that are unannounced, which they try to do monthly based on the teacher's workload. Joe Salamone asked the members to jot down ideas for discussion during the next month, as these thoughts could be talked about and brought up as a recommendation. Joe Salamone asked members to talk about what time of day is their quiet, peaceful time to relax. Emily Greico stated at her school it is senior privilege as seniors are able to leave the campus for lunch. Bari Gruber noted that in her school students could only leave if they were 18, had a car and/or parents' permission. Gianna Tantillo noted that at her school she can leave in 8th and 9th period, if they are open. Adrianna Romeo said in her school they have a scanner which you need to scan for each class which marks you in attendance for each class.

Joe Salamone that he means a quiet place where you can focus solely on your thoughts, such as the shower. So his spot would be in the shower, where he has a whiteboard to write down notes. He asked the members to think about writing down any suggestions, and if you are in that one place with your thoughts be able to write information down. Joe Salamone mentioned that he remembered emailing someone three weeks later but remembered to do that in the shower, so in your moments of clarity sometimes you will be able to think about these ideas. Melanie Clements mentioned that she likes to relax at the Carmen's River LIRR bridge, even though that may be weird. Joe Salamone asked her to be careful and be cognizant of the third rail.

Joe Salamone finished the meeting by asking members to go through prior meeting minutes as well in order to find any ideas for recommendations.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m. The next meeting of the Youth Anti-Bullying Task Force was scheduled for Thursday, March 26th, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in Hauppauge. *Meeting has since been cancelled due to the Coronavirus / COVID-19 outbreak.*

Respectfully submitted, Derek Stein, Legislative Aide to Presiding Officer Robert Calarco.