

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOL, OTHER DRUGS & YOUTH SERVICES

January 21, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Chairman Thomas called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Messrs.: M. Quigley, K. Treacy

1. Strategic Staffing Initiative presented by Michael Quigley, Office of Youth Services Director.

Michael Quigley, OYS Director, stated with me tonight is our Youth Services Manager, Kristen Treacy. We are going to go over some of our strategic goals with you today with the expectation that we will go through these slides pretty quickly as most of the stuff is in your packet. We will then leave time for questions because I think that is more important. We had an opportunity to meet with Aldermen Barry and Thomas and went over some of this. She asked that we come in and review this with you tonight. To get started, as we think about the next 3-5 years for OYS, myself and the leadership team, Mario and Kristen, have been creating a strategic plan. Based on that, we started to set some goals that we want to accomplish over the next few years that are listed here for you tonight. The first one being to achieve what would be full staffing to meet the capacity for the students that we work with in the public schools and the youth that we work with in the community. That is the Broad Interventions of Youth Program, the big program. I won't go into detail as to what that is as I have in the past but that is everything we do with youth as far as one-on-one youth service counseling and youth development. Our second goal was really thinking about a dedicated office space for OYS and getting a van for the department as well to transport youth to our programs. More than 70% of our youth don't have transportation to get to the programs that we run after school or in the evenings. Interestingly enough, we had a good conversation with Alderman Morgan and it sounds like he might have a van for us. We are working on something and it is pretty cool that he brought that forward to us. We want to establish flagship workforce development programs for out-of-school disconnected youth similar to our Youth Build Program here in the city. We have been working with our Opportunity Youth Task Force on some of these initiatives recently so this work has already started. We want to build partnerships to reach those disconnected youths. Most importantly, young people who may be homeless or connected to gangs. Our last numbers showed us that there were 784 students in Manchester in our public schools that identified as not having a home or a steady house that they could go to. So with that, addressing youth homelessness through comprehensive strategies and bringing the community together to talk about some solutions to addressing these problems for unhoused youth.

Kristen Treacy, Youth Services Manager, stated some of our accomplishments over the last couple of years have really been foundational to where we are going next. We have been able to expand and really solidify the program offerings. About half of our programming is done in the schools and that looks like the Big Program, Future

Success, and Take Control. The other half of our programming is happening in a community-based way. These are things like our Leadership Academy, vision board, summer programming and things that we do during school vacation times. We have really been able to set a nice menu of offerings for the community over the last two years and be really diligent in developing those programs well. We have also been able to take a more structured role with some of our community partners through the MOU process. This includes the school district as well as MCRC, My Turn, Safari Youth Club, Girl's Inc. and there are a number of other community partners that we have been able to do some really foundational work with. As far as school engagement goes, for the previous school year we had about 350 youth who were referred to us. That number is actually trending up this year. We are at the halfway point of the fiscal year so looking at referrals so far we are up about 26% this year with the same amount of staffing. For leadership development with our youth, there are some really exciting things we have been taking on. Those include the Youth Council and the Opportunity Youth Task Force. These things are really looking at the foundational causes of why youth are disconnected and asking them what is it going to take to get you back on a path that feels safe, happy and healthy and bringing them into that process.

Mr. Quigley stated we also have MOU's with the Salvation Army and YMCA where we provide services to the Salvation Army and community at their teen program on Friday nights and Kids Café during the week. On page 2 of the letter I submitted, it goes over our OYS school coverage map and this will give you an idea of what we are currently doing. The reason I want to show you that is so you can see the discrepancies between the schools based on the capacity of the staff we currently have. It says here no dedicated staff at MST, West, Hillside and Southside. That is very general for the slide. Basically, West High School is covered by Mario Pena. He is not a Youth Services Counselor. Mario is an in-school programs manager. His job is a leadership position to oversee everything we do in the public schools. He is not really able to do that because he is serving 50 youth at West currently. He also provides services over at Founder's Academy, the charter school, and MST. He is doing a lot of service work and not what he is currently hired to do. The same goes for Hillside. Hillside is covered by Yusuf Juma and he is a Youth Development Coach who was hired to run all the programs that we offer in the community – our Leadership Academy, and the Youth Council; basically helping young people and getting them connected to jobs and internships while also teaching them leadership skills. Now he still does that. He teaches classes throughout the community but three days a week he is at Hillside to fill the gap there of them not having an OYS Youth Services Counselor. He manages a caseload currently of 37 youth there. At Southside, that is covered by interns and they are interns that we get through Southern NH University. It is a relationship that we love but we fear isn't sustainable because of the supervision that they are not getting when they are at that school. There isn't a seasoned OYS Youth Counselor or myself there to supervise what they are doing in their interactions with youth. We do have a partnership with the school that there be a staff member at that school doing that but it is not always fluid and it concerns us long-term. MST. We just have staff going there when we get referrals. If a police officer or a school resource officer or whatever contacts us, a staff member that is available that day that works within our high schools will go there. That kind of tells you the story of the overextended staff and with more staff, we can make sure that these schools have the same services that we have at Memorial, Central, Parkside and McLaughlin where they have a dedicated staff member there five days a week and they

are able to work with all the youth that are present. Our proposed staffing expansion looks like this and this also is in your packet. If you go to pages 4 and 5, it gives you more detail on what additional staff could be doing. If we were to add six more Youth Service Counselors, which we know is a huge ask, we would be able to fill all the goals that we have strategically over the next 3-5 years while also providing services to all of the middle and high schools and starting the process of providing services to the elementary schools. That would be our fifth staff member; somebody who would go into a pilot program at one of the elementary schools which is something that has been brought up from some of the aldermen here and the school district as something they would like to see. Our department also sees that as a need. That sixth staff member would be responsible for Founder's Academy and what we would be doing in the charter schools here in Manchester. Currently, Founders gets Mario one day a week and that is all the coverage they get as a charter school here in the district. They have a lot of students on that campus. You see the cost estimate there. I will say that is an estimate and projection. When I have submitted my level-funded budget to the Mayor, Sharon always finds discrepancies. It is usually only somewhere in the hundreds or low thousands but it is usually off by a little bit so I would suggest that this number is a little off. Sharon hasn't been able to take a look at it yet. She usually corrects my math. It is in the ballpark for sure. You will see here that we will be able to serve an estimated additional 220 youth. With the expanded coverage, as I talked about the schools, there is also a community benefit. On Page 5 it talks about other program responsibilities that these additional staff members could take on. Currently, I oversee the OYS Youth Council, which when it started we had six youth. This year we have close to 30. We never envisioned it growing so quickly and turning into what it has become, which is fantastic but as a department head that is a lot for me to take on when I am trying to run the department. We would take one of those additional staff members who would oversee a school and also have them oversee the Youth Council. That would be similar to what some of our staff do now. We have staff who oversee McLaughlin Middle School who also oversee the work we do at Salvation Army in covering Kids Café and going to their teen program on Friday nights. Every new staff member would have an additional job in the community so that we could be connecting with youth both in school and after school, at night, during school vacations and of course in the summer when we see the most youth getting in trouble with the law and so forth. Some of the consequences that we see as a department if we can't expand coverage and capacity are a loss of total services at some of the schools in the district. We are not going to be able to continue to provide the coverage that we do at these schools because we would like our staff to be able to do the jobs that they were hired to do. Mario is now in charge of all of our MOU's in the schools and our programs that we run in the schools. Ideally, we would love for him to be able to go from school to school to make sure things are operating right, identifying where services aren't going well and where we could be doing better, as well as what schools need specific programs and how to expand on those programs through development to offer more to the youth. Yusuf was hired to be in the community and finding youth, helping them find jobs, connecting them to programs and even working with their parents. Since Yusuf was hired, he has been able to find 30+ parents of youth on our caseloads jobs and connect them to the workforce, which is good for the whole family. That was the intention of his hire but a lot of his time is being taken up in the school. With the strain on me overseeing the Youth Council, I am a little concerned long-term capacity wise how effectively we can run the Youth Council without some additional help.

Ms. Treacy stated just looking ahead at the sustainability and growth over time, we are being very intentional about looking at a variety of funding sources. We understand that there might be opportunities out there for us in the community and we are trying to be as creative as we can knowing that there might be other options for us. We are actively looking into some potential sources for that as well. Really what the staff are most passionate about are expanding programming to meet our kids where they are at. The staff have such beautiful relationships with all the kids they work with that the kids are really open about what it is that they need and what they are facing. Our staff have really taken that to heart and really want to develop these systems to help these kids move into very productive paths throughout their lives. Overall, it is our vision as a department that OYS be the cornerstone for youth services in the city. We really want to work with every provider in the city and collaborate with every organization and be a leader for how to best serve youth. It is something that we have all done for a very long time. The department has a huge number of years of experience under our belt and we want to continue to grow that. Really our vision for the future comes from just really wanting to invest in the work.

Mr. Quigley stated no matter what the outcome, we didn't come in with this strategic plan with any expectation other than laying out the plan and being honest about our concerns. One thing I can say about my team and myself, and it is probably the thing I love most about my department, is there are no experts that work in youth development at OYS. Generally, I don't think there are any experts when it comes to youth development because youth are changing all the time and it is hard to keep up with them. The reason we know we are not experts is because we are always hungry to find the answers and that comes with hard work. We work really hard. If we weren't to get any more funding, that dedication isn't going to stop. We aren't going to complain. We are going to focus and zero in and find solutions to the things we can control. What I am concerned about are the things we can't control. I think we have grown a lot over the last two years in what we offer and we are really good at it. I don't know how sustainable all of it is unless we get some investment for growth. That is just the honest truth of our assessment. No matter what the assessment is, this team is going to continue to do well and serve this city well and do whatever we can for the youth here. Thank you for letting us present and we would be happy to answer any questions.

Alderman Vincent stated I appreciate what you guys do. It means a lot and I know that you might not get the recognition you deserve but I appreciate what you guys do. Let's be realistic because that is what we have to be in this world. We are in a budget season. What would your priority be? There are six here. Let's say with the budget we could make two new staff members work. Where would you prioritize those with the four deficiency areas you have like MST, West, Southside and Hillside? You guys are right across the street from West.

Mr. Quigley answered we would prioritize West High School and Hillside Middle School.

Alderman Vincent asked so you already know what your priorities are in those areas.

Mr. Quigley replied yes.

Alderman Vincent stated I just want you to be realistic. I appreciate you breaking down the numbers. That certainly makes it easier.

Mr. Quigley stated those are projections.

Alderman Vincent stated I have a comment. OYS falls under the city as a department. The work that you do is heavily involved with the school district. Why isn't the school district involved? I am asking because I don't know. Why don't you fall under the school district and why aren't they supporting you with some of these endeavors that you do for the students in our city? I am just curious because I feel that maybe you would have a better chance of getting more funding if you were under the school district.

Mr. Quigley responded I think I know the answer as to why it has never happened. I don't think anybody has ever asked the school district to give us more money; at least until I was brought on...

Alderman Vincent interjected excuse me. Have they given you money?

Mr. Quigley replied no they haven't given us any money. I said that wrong. Thank you for correcting me. When we sat down with the superintendent, we brought this up. We said there is a concern that you don't necessarily see the value of our work because there has never been a discussion about the school district maybe paying for an additional staff member or paying for a staff member in general. Her answer to us was honest. She said of course we love you guys but you just never asked. So what she asked of us was to go to the mayor and see if there was something the city could cover and then go back to her and let her know so she can then look for funds in her budget. So if the city funded one, maybe she could fund one.

Alderman Vincent stated that is where I am going with this. If this is something we can collaborate on with the school district, then I think it would serve the city and the students even more. If the school district is invested in this, maybe the two turns into four or the three turns into the six. Do you see what I am saying?

Mr. Quigley responded yes.

Alderman Vincent asked how do we go about making that work. Are you relying on us first to work the budget which we will begin shortly?

Mr. Quigley answered yes and we haven't had a chance to meet the mayor yet. We meet with him on Thursday. We have been in discussions with him and we have been up front that we have been meeting with all the aldermen but we finally meet this Thursday and that is when we will get a better picture of what his perspective is.

Alderman Vincent asked so when I see you on Friday we will be able to talk about what the mayor said.

Mr. Quigley replied yes.

Alderman Vincent asked when you say partial coverage, can you tell us what that entails. Dedicated staff are full-time and there on-site and we get that but partial coverage, what exactly is the expectation that a school should have for that when it comes to OYS?

Mr. Quigley answered that is laid out in our MOU with the district. It says that Yusuf is there on Mondays and Thursdays at Hillside. When he is there, he is a Youth Services Counselor doing all of those things. With MST, when we show up and you say there is a kid there we have to work with, when we are there that is what we are doing.

Alderman Barry stated Mike I know we have met a few times. I agree with you that we 100% need more staff members. I have had the privilege and honor of seeing Mario in action so I know exactly how he works and I know he is a go getter. One of the things that Alderman Vincent brought up is something I brought up to you which is why aren't the schools financing any of this. Just like you said, if you don't ask, you don't get. Hopefully, we can work together with the schools and you to get the funding on our side. I propose we find the office space. Now I am going to be a little bit selfish because I don't want you to leave the west side. I know, unfortunately, there is probably not much space on the west side but I would hope that you would continue to use the library for the west side kids. Hopefully when you talk to the mayor you will mention that we would love to find office space for you. It is a long time coming. Alderman O'Neil brought this up in the past. It should have happened years ago. I think you are doing a great job and you are extending your mission and adding on, which is good. We haven't seen that. It was one of those departments where you had your staff members doing the same thing over and over again but now you have added on. When Kelly and I had gone to your meetings with the kids, that was super and when Mario talked about going on Friday or Saturday nights to the Salvation Army when they do the teens night and stuff like that...they are extending themselves to the weekends and not just school hours, 7 AM until 3 PM. They are going above and beyond. They are including themselves in athletic events. I think it is very important for the city to know exactly what your office is doing because a lot of people don't know. I know that Alderman Vincent is familiar with this but he proposed getting a grant writer for the City of Manchester. That is another alternative for funding. Hopefully, we can all work together and get this done. I agree that you absolutely need more staff. Thank you.

Alderman Kantor stated I just wanted to say that the presentation at the last BMA meeting was amazing. I totally support this. I discussed with you my concern about money and the school district not investing in our children more. That is my big concern. I am really grateful for all that you are doing.

Alderman O'Neil asked how are the schools that are covered now identified versus the schools that are partially covered. How is that determination made?

Mr. Quigley responded I think a lot of it was decided before I came on board and was based on relationships we had in the schools built over time. We tried to identify the need over the last two years since I have been here and we have definitely seen a need at Hillside and West for our services, more so but not to a huge extent than our other schools MST and Southside. As a team, that is what we have determined. As far as

the number of referrals that we get from those schools in comparison to Southside and MST, we have always had more from Hillside and West.

Alderman O'Neil asked so Central, Memorial, McLaughlin and Parkside were covered when you became the director.

Mr. Quigley answered yes.

Alderman O'Neil stated I thought there was somebody at one time at Hillside.

Ms. Treacy stated we had a previous structure where staff were sharing two schools. There was a staff person sharing Parkside and Hillside and a staff person sharing McLaughlin and Southside. For us, that was not a sustainable model, much like we are talking about now with the partial coverage. Based on the need of the school and the amount of referrals, we decided that those staff would be dedicated to one school to have better quality of service.

Alderman O'Neil asked do you have a breakdown of how many referrals for each school.

Mr. Quigley responded yes we have that and we have our active cases.

Alderman O'Neil stated Alderman Barry brought this up but many years ago and maybe we can ask the Clerk to find out the status of this but there was a Master Plan for Sheehan-Basquill Park and that site being a permanent home for OYS came up. I am not sure what the status of that Master Plan is now. There was a building there at one time. It wasn't large enough to staff the entire department but it was the Regis Lemaire Center, the long-time OYS Director, and got torn down. I believe at the time there was a commitment that we would rebuild. Maybe that would be a good location for a permanent home for OYS and maybe the Clerk can find out from Public Works what the status of that Master Plan is. That would be helpful.

Ms. Treacy stated I can tell you that so far for this school year alone, so the past four months, we have had 146 referrals come from the schools.

Alderman O'Neil asked do you have that broken down by schools.

Ms. Treacy answered yes.

Chairman Thomas stated I have a question and you don't have to get the answer to me now if you don't know. I know you don't have any dedicated staff in the elementary schools right now but that is one thing I am pushing for because I know it starts there. Do you have any referrals from elementary schools yet?

Mr. Quigley responded we don't have any this year but we did have some last year and Mario was the one who handled them. Basically we were hands-off because the staff that are currently on board are not trained to work with children that age. It would have to be a brand-new position. We wouldn't call it a Youth Services Counselor. It would be

something like a Youth/Child Counselor or something like that. It is very seldom that we get a referral from an elementary school.

Chairman Thomas asked so would you need someone that is more of a therapist.

Ms. Treacy replied we would just want to make sure that someone's training was going to be developmentally appropriate for that age group. Our staff in the middle and high schools have experience at those age levels and that is why they are a good fit. We would just want someone who has that sort of developmental background.

Chairman Thomas stated thank you so much for coming. I am in favor of all of this.

Alderman Long stated your sheet shows that six new employees would be able to handle an additional 220 students. Can you give us the numbers for each individual new employee?

Mr. Quigley answered of course.

Alderman Long asked currently what is your percentage...are there times when the things you are doing are not school related. Do you know what that percentage is?

Mr. Quigley replied we can give you that percentage. I would guess it is less than 20% but we can get that exact percentage for you.

Alderman Long asked so if you are mentoring a student who has two or three brothers and sisters, do you sometimes also provide services to them.

Mr. Quigley responded that ends up happening yes.

Alderman Long asked so it is not 100% school.

Mr. Quigley answered no.

Ms. Treacy stated about 1/3 of our referrals so far this year have come from the community. That might be a parent calling us or through the ACERT Team or another program. Right now about 1/3 of our referrals are community-based.

Mr. Quigley stated but they are typically in school students.

Ms. Treacy stated yes the students receive the services in school but the referral from the service came from outside the school.

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Barry**, duly seconded by **Alderman Vincent**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Clerk of Committee